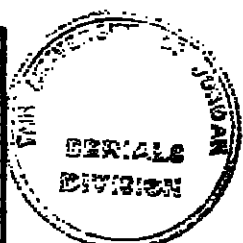


Syria frees jailed Palestinians

TUNIS (R) — Syria said Tuesday it had freed all Palestinians in its jails, and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) sources in Tunis said most were long-detained supporters of PLO leader Yasser Arafat. Announcing the release in Damascus, a Syrian official did not say how many Palestinians had been freed or how long they had been held. "Concerned Syrian authorities today released all Palestinians detained. Those released had committed offences in a previous period which required their detention," the official said. PLO sources said there were 4,000 to 5,000 Palestinians in Syrian prisons and most had been held since relations between Mr. Arafat and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad soured in 1983. The question of their release had been a stumbling block in mediation efforts, mainly by Algeria, the sources said.



Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية والرأي

Emir may return to Kuwait Thursday

PARIS (R) — The Emir of Kuwait could return home from exile Thursday, two weeks after the liberation of his country, Arab diplomatic sources said Tuesday. The Emir, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, has been in exile in the Saudi resort of Taif since Iraq took over Kuwait on Aug. 2. Troops of the U.S.-led alliance recaptured the emirate 12 days ago. "The Emir will return home maybe in two days," the sources said. Kuwait's crown prince and prime minister, Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah, returned home last week with the entire cabinet which includes several members of the ruling Sabah family. The Emir travelled to Mecca to perform Umra Monday but it was not clear whether he then returned to Taif.

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Clark in Iran

NICOSIA (R) — Canadian Foreign Minister Joe Clark, the most senior Canadian official to visit Iran since the 1979 Islamic revolution, discussed the aftermath of the Gulf war with Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati Tuesday. Mr. Velayati reiterated Iran's policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of Iraq and said its future should be determined by its people alone, Tehran Radio reported. Mr. Clark said regional countries needed to trust each other more to guarantee their security.

Hogg begins visit to Syria

DAMASCUS (R) — British Foreign Office Minister Douglas Hogg arrived in Damascus Tuesday for talks on Middle East peace and Western hostages held in Lebanon. He is the first British minister to visit since relations were restored in November after a four-year break. "We want to stress our willingness to establish good relations with the Syrian government," Mr. Hogg told reporters.

U.S. cancels travel advisory

WASHINGTON (AP) — The State Department has cancelled a seven-week-old notice warning Americans travelling anywhere in the world of the potential for Gulf-related attacks. The initial advisory had been issued as the allies started the air war against Iraqi forces. "With the cessation of hostilities in the Persian Gulf, the worldwide-Persian Gulf advisory of Jan. 16, 1991, has been cancelled," a department statement said. At the same time, it warned that tensions still remain in portions of the Middle East, Africa and South Asia even though a ceasefire is in place in the Gulf.

Schwarzkopf visits Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY (AP) — U.S. General H. Norman Schwarzkopf arrived in Kuwait City Tuesday and took sand from the free beaches of Kuwait in the first visit of the commanding general of the allied forces to the oil-rich emirate. He filled a small bottle with sand from Kuwait beach. Gen. Schwarzkopf flew into Kuwait in his U.S. army C-21 transport plane, met with Kuwait's prime minister and crown prince, Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah, and U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait Edward Gnehm. "As far as I'm concerned, it's over," the general said, referring to the war.

Egypt, Iran to reopen interest sections

CAIRO (AP) — Egypt and Iran will reopen interest sections next week in a first step towards resuming diplomatic relations severed almost 12 years ago, a Foreign Ministry official said Tuesday. The official said Ahmad Namek, who holds the rank of ambassador, will head Egypt's interest section at the French embassy in Tehran next week. Iran also will send a representative whose office will be attached to the Swiss embassy in Cairo.

Algerians do not plan to boycott Haj

RIVADH (AP) — Algeria's ambassador to Saudi Arabia has said his country will not boycott this year's Haj, the official Saudi Press Agency reported Tuesday. "The press reports that said Algeria might boycott the coming Haj season are not true," Abdul Qadir Ben Saleh said after talks late Monday with Saudi Minister of Pilgrimage and Endowments Abdul Wahab Abdul Wasie.

Mubarak, Fernandez Ordonez meet

CAIRO (AP) — Spanish Foreign Minister Francisco Fernandez Ordonez met President Hosni Mubarak Tuesday and said afterwards that they discussed bilateral relations and the post-war situation in the Gulf region. The Spanish official was also quoted by the state-run Middle East News Agency as saying that Mr. Mubarak stressed the importance of maintaining the territorial integrity of Iraq.

Karbala, Najaf under firm Iraqi army control

Saddam chairs top-level meeting

Combined agency dispatches

IRAQI TROOPS retook two major southern cities as opposition leaders meeting in Beirut squabbled over their individual role in the dissension against the Baghdad government.

The opposition leaders conceded Tuesday that Iraq's troops were in control of the Shiite Muslim holy cities of Karbala and Najaf.

Iran's official media said loyalist forces had used napalm to try to crush the rebellion in the southern port city of Basra.

Rebel sources claim control of many towns and cities in the north, but the inconsistency of their reports indicate that many areas are see-sawing between government and insurgent control.

Kurdish guerrillas claimed they beat back an attack near Chamshmal, north of Kirkuk, by Iraqi troops supported by gunships, artillery and tanks.

Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency quoted an unidentified spokesman of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) as saying the government threatened to kill 5,000 Kurds who had allegedly been rounded up and taken to Kirkuk.

A PUK source in Tehran

claimed that the rebels had cut the highway between Baghdad and Kirkuk.

Sources at a meeting in Beirut of 325 Iraqi opposition leaders from 23 factions conceded that Iraqi troops had retaken Karbala and Najaf after heavy fighting on Monday.

"Several towns change hands repeatedly. One day we control them and the other day the army controls them. Then we attack them again. There is still some fighting in Najaf and Karbala, but most of them are controlled by the army," said one source, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The Iraqi newspaper Al Thawra reported Tuesday that First Deputy Prime Minister Taha Yassin Ramadan, a Revolutionary Command Council member, was among four high-ranking government officials who visited four southern provinces Monday.

Bayan Jaber of the Shi'ite Supreme Assembly for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq claimed Monday in Damascus that Mr. Ramadan was killed by President Saddam's bodyguards when he shot the Iraqi leader in the right hand in an assassination attempt.

The Iraqi run media has made no direct reference to the insurrection.

But the newspaper story mentioning Mr. Ramadan appeared designed to lay to rest claims that he had been killed, as well as indicate that the government had retaken control in Babil, Maisan and Dhi Qar provinces in southern Iraq.

The government's recapture of Najaf and Karbala was a propaganda blow to the rebels.

In a separate report, Radio Baghdad said President Saddam met Military Industrialisation Minister Hussein Kamel Hassan who reported to the Iraqi leader on a visit he made to Karbala.

Mr. Hassan, according to Iraqi exiles, has been a constant companion of President Saddam since the Gulf crisis erupted last August with Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait.

He is the brother of Interior Minister Ali Hassan Al Majid, appointed by President Saddam a week ago.

The opposition leaders meanwhile tried to bridge their differences over the strategy of their rebellion and the future of Iraq if they can topple President Saddam.

A major theme of the conference was the need for better coordination among the rebel

(Continued on page 5)

Two Israeli soldiers killed after struck by Palestinian car

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — A Palestinian driver killed two Israeli soldiers when his car struck an army foot patrol in the occupied Gaza Strip, the army said Tuesday. It said investigators were examining whether it was intentional or an accident.

The incident, in which two other soldiers also were injured, occurred late Monday afternoon two hours after the arrival of U.S. Secretary of State James Baker.

But the army delayed publication apparently over difficulties in finding relatives to notify them.

The accident occurred in Beit Hanoun, in northern Gaza, as soldiers were in patrol, the army said. An automobile bearing local license plates struck them, and the driver, a Palestinian, was shot and wounded as he sped away, it added.

One soldier died on the spot and a second died while he was being taken to hospital, the army said. It said a third was injured

moderately and another lightly. The driver was later tracked down at his home in nearby Gaza City's Sejiyeh quarter, the army said.

"From preliminary investigations it is unclear whether it was an accident or an intentional hit," the statement added.

Israeli Radio said the automobile, veered across the road and struck the soldiers as they walked in the opposite direction. The driver reportedly was treated at a local hospital before returning home.

Also in Gaza, soldiers sealed off the home of Mohammad Mustafa Abu Jalla, a Palestinian from Jabalya refugee camp who was shot in the leg and arrested after stabbing four women to death in Jerusalem Sunday.

The house was sealed with cement blocks. The army has frequently sealed or demolished homes of Palestinians suspected of anti-Israeli activities.

Police said Abu Jalla told them

he carried out the killings as a "message to Baker."

A court extended Abu Jalla's detention for 15 days while the incidents are investigated.

Abu Jalla, his hands and feet shackled, told the court, "I was taking revenge for the death of my cousin who was shot by soldiers two years ago," the Tim news agency said.

A policeman testified that Abu Jalla threatened to kill more Jews during questioning, including his interrogator, Tim said. It added that Abu Jalla shouted obscenities against Mr. Baker in English to reporters as he was taken from the court.

He told police earlier that Israeli soldiers had killed his cousin during clashes in the occupied Gaza Strip two years ago. On Monday, journalists were allowed to photograph him leaving police headquarters in a blood-soaked hospital gown with a bandaged arm and a black eye.

More than 10,000 Kuwaitis trying to leave their country

KUWAIT CITY (AP) — Thousands of Kuwaitis mobbed a soccer stadium Tuesday as they applied to leave Kuwait, saying the government has failed to provide food, water and electricity.

So far, more than 10,000 people have requested permission to leave the country temporarily, two weeks after it was freed from Iraqi occupation, an official at the Ministry of Interior said.

"The government is simply incompetent, unqualified, unpopular and unwanted," said Abdullah Al Fadyl, one of the estimated 2,000 applicants that descended on the Kadma soccer stadium Tuesday morning.

"I've been coming here for three days," said the 32-year-old engineer. "Still, the bureaucrats do nothing."

A high-ranking official at the Ministry of Interior, meanwhile, criticised what he called the government's plans to begin allowing Kuwait's refugees to return to home later this week.

The official said if Kuwaitis are allowed to return to the country soon, its limited resources will be severely taxed, raising the possibility of civil unrest.

"You take all the lines you see

at foodstores, gas stations and water tanks and double them by 10," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "At the ministry, we are worried of violence."

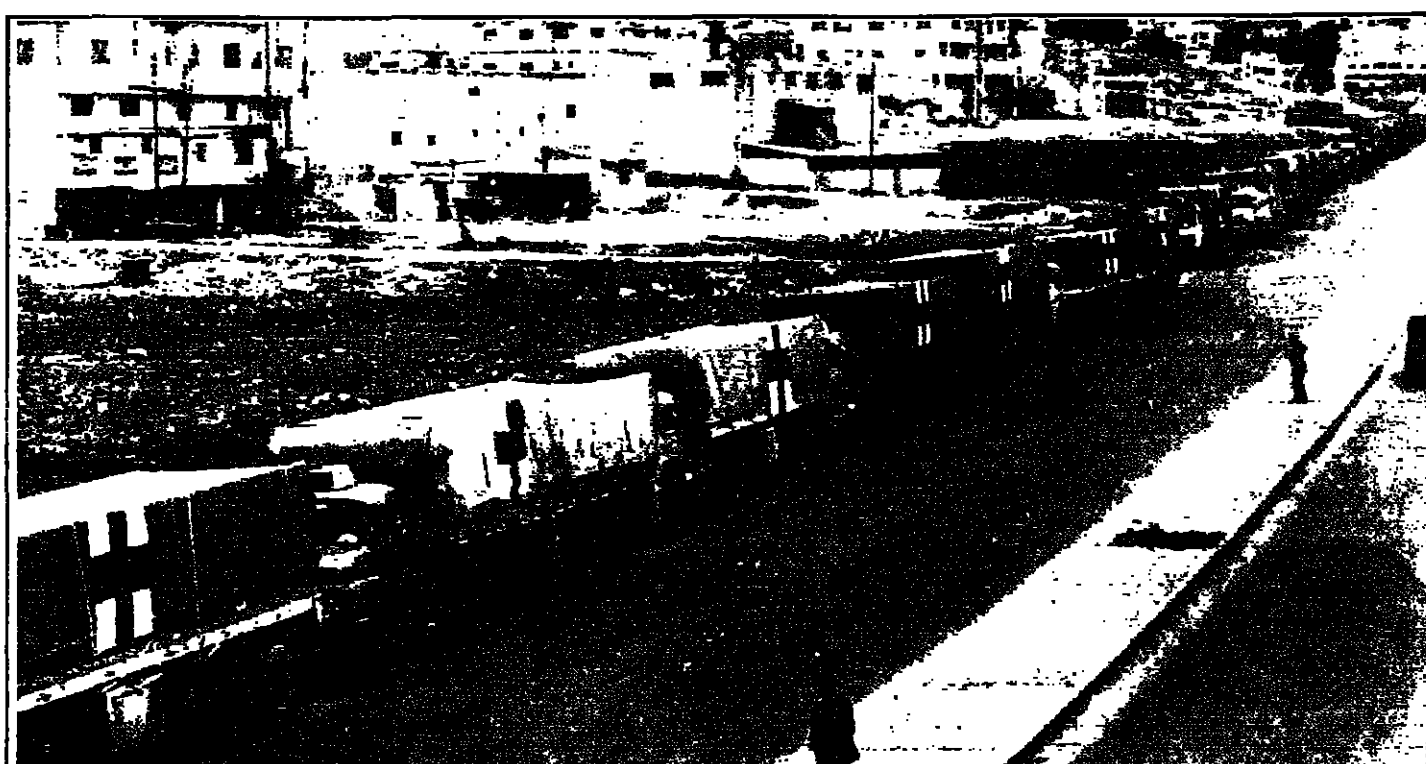
Kuwait's population before the invasion was estimated at between 1.8 million and 2.1 million of which 800,000 were Kuwaitis. About 500,000 Kuwaitis either fled or were outside of country when Iraqis took over the country.

"The streets are full of guns and ammunition," he said. "If people come back angry we will have big problems."

The crowd at the soccer stadium appeared to reflect a general dissatisfaction among many Kuwaitis with the government's apparent failure to provide essentials to the people who suffered through the seven-month Iraqi occupation.

The government promised electricity would be restored more than one week ago but until now it has not done so. Water has also been promised but taps have yet to be turned back on. Tonnes of food has rotted because the government did not supply forklifts to unload container trucks.

(Continued on page 5)



RELIEF CONVOY: Thirty-two trucks packed with relief supplies for the Iraqi people arranged by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) leave Jordan Tuesday (Photo by Yusef Al 'Allan)

Israel rejects land-for-peace as condition for negotiations

Mubarak: Time not ripe for conference

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel dug in its heels in talks with the United States Tuesday and ruled out a land for peace swap as the basis for negotiations with Arab states and Palestinians.

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker met Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir for 80 minutes for talks described by an Israeli spokesman as "good and friendly."

But the head of Mr. Shamir's office said that concentrating on United Nations Security Council resolutions calling on Israel to withdraw from occupied territories would lead to failure.

Mr. Baker restated the U.S. position when he arrived Monday that Israel should comply with Resolutions 242 and 338.

"To focus only on the U.N. resolutions can lead only to failure," Yossi Ben Aharon, direc-

tor general of Mr. Shamir's office, told Israel Radio. "It is natural we all must be ready for negotiations without preconditions, and then we will confront the territorial issue."

U.S. officials gave no details of the meeting with Mr. Shamir.

Mr. Baker has said he did not want to miss an historic opportunity to build peace in the Middle East after the West and its Arab allies defeated Iraq.

He told reporters late Monday he had detected flexibility and support among Washington's eight Arab anti-Iraq coalition partners for a peace initiative.

Mr. Baker said he had seen signs of new thinking among the Arabs but gave no concrete examples.

He urged Israel to respond to this and "avoid retreating into stating final positions as being non-negotiable demands."

Baker later met leaders from the West Bank. The meeting with prominent Palestinians, who support the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), was arranged after days of uncertainty by both sides.

Baker, setting the stage for his talks with Mr. Shamir, said on Monday night of the Arabs: "I have seen what I consider to be, at least, signs of new thinking. I have seen what I consider to be a willingness to consider new approaches."

But, Baker said, apparently directing his remarks to Mr. Shamir, "whether that ripens and materialises into specific, concrete commitments will depend on large part on whether or not there is a similar attitude coming from the other side of the equation."

(Continued on page 5)

Iraq says cholera, typhoid spreading

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq said Tuesday that cases of cholera and typhoid were spreading and urgent medical supplies were needed to prevent epidemics.

Water and sewage systems were badly damaged by allied bombing during the Gulf war and many Iraqis are taking their drinking water straight from heavily-polluted rivers.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that Baghdad's water supply is down to five per cent of its pre-war level.

Ibrahim Ahmad Al Nouri, head of the Iraqi Red Crescent, said in a letter to the Madrid-based Foundation for Peace against Hunger and Discrimination: "A few days ago cholera and typhoid started spreading in Iraq and cases are continuing to appear."

The foundation's president, Malek Ghafouri, told Reuters that Mr. Nouri also informed him that Iraq was in urgent need of

medicine to combat the spread of the diseases.

"He also told me Iraq urgently needed large quantities of baby powdered milk," said Mr. Ghafouri, a Spaniard of Iraqi origin. Mr. Ghafouri, who has been in Iraq for the last 10 days, said Mr. Nouri informed him that officials of the Paris-based Medicine sans Frontieres had also been told about the spread of the diseases.

Mr. Nouri gave no details about the number of cases or where in Iraq the diseases were spreading.

Mr. Ghafouri had visited eight hospitals in Baghdad where he said power shortages had "greatly affected medical operations which are restricted only to emergency cases."

He said: "Small power generators are not enough because they work for two hours only. There is no heating and some medicine needs special tempera-

tures to be preserved."

He appealed to non-governmental organisations to provide Iraq with relief aid.

A 21-member United Nations mission arrived in Baghdad on Sunday with more than 20 tonnes of supplies, authorised by a Security Council decision to exempt humanitarian aid from economic sanctions still in force against Iraq for its takeover of Kuwait.

The supplies include water purification equipment and spare parts for pumping stations, as well as a variety of vaccines, medicines and baby food.

Four doctors from Medicine sans Frontieres, who visited hospitals and clinics in Baghdad to assess medical needs, said Sunday their group had a large quantity of medicines and medical equipment ready in Europe to be shipped to Iraq.

"We have a general idea about health conditions in Iraq, but we

want to assess the situation ourselves and decide how many doctors we should send to Iraq and how much medical relief it needs," said the Dutch leader of the team, Jacques de Milliano.

Before leaving Jordan for Iraq his Belgian colleague, Reginald Moreels, said disease could break out in Baghdad soon.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is also sending food, medicine and water treatment equipment. An 18-truck Red Cross convoy arrived Sunday, also carrying medicines donated by the Moroccan Red Crescent.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) issued a statement saying it would send supplies from Jordan Tuesday.

The statement said a 20-truck convoy would carry 92 tonnes of medicines, vaccines, refrigeration equipment and water purification machinery.

OPEC to cut output to 22.3 million bpd

GENEVA (R) — A meeting of OPEC ministers Tuesday sealed an agreement to reduce the organisation's oil output to 22.3 million barrels per day (bpd) in the aftermath of the Gulf war, ministers said.

The gathering of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) market monitoring committee, which began Monday, focused on how to keep the market in balance and prices stable while the Gulf region was still beset by crisis.

The cut would effectively clip 700,000 bpd off independent analysts' estimates of OPEC production in February, but was around 1.1 million barrels below what ministers reckon to be OPEC's sustainable production capacity.

"All OPEC ministers have agreed to cut output, two countries had reservations on the ceiling," Gabonese Oil Minister Jean Ping said.

Asked by reporters if the ceiling agreed was 22.3 million bpd, Mr. Ping said: "Yes."

Indonesian Oil Minister Ginanjar Kartasasmita also confirmed that the ceiling was 22.3 million bpd.

Iran and Algeria were the two countries which had reservation about the agreement, an Algerian delegate said.

OPEC later confirmed a production ceiling of 22,298,000 barrels bpd for the second quarter of 1991 in a communiqué, and said its goal was a reference price of \$21 a barrel.

"Bearing in mind the fundamental objective of achieving the OPEC basket price of \$21 a barrel (the market monitoring committee) therefore decided to reduce the production," the communiqué said.

Under the new ceiling, Saudi Arabia, OPEC's largest producer, was allocated a production level of 8,034,000 bpd, which compares with independent estimates of Saudi output in February of 8.2 million bpd.

The second largest producer, Iran, was allocated a 3,217,000 bpd production level.

Neither Iraq nor Kuwait, which produced around 4.5 million bpd prior to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait last August, were allocated any quota as both coun-

tries' oil industries were wrecked by the war.

OPEC's production has been running flat out since a price and quota agreement established last July was suspended following the invasion.

That pact set a ceiling of 22.5 million bpd for the 13 OPEC members and the \$21 reference price.

The new production deal is an interim measure to see OPEC through the second quarter. Ministers are expected to reestablish quotas on a longer-term basis once the crisis in the Gulf is judged to be over. A plenary session is planned in early June. OPEC ministers estimated their countries' collective output since the crisis began at an average 23.4 million bpd.

Israel building for 11,000 emigres in occupied lands

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israel, running the risk of more anger in Washington, has launched a programme to house at least 11,000 immigrants in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, a housing ministry report says.

A copy of the document was passed to Reuters by opposition members of parliament fighting government plans to more than double the Jewish population of the occupied territories.

Headed, "State of Israel, housing and construction ministry, immigrants building administration," the report details plans to erect 5,800 prefabricated houses, mobile homes and permanent building in 63 settlements in the occupied territories.

A ministry document obtained by Reuters last week contained additional plans to house 88,000 Israelis in the occupied territories, where at least 90,000 Jews already live in fortified enclaves.

Leftist legislator Charlie Biton said Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's rightwing government was boosting settlement to counter pressure on Israel to quit the occupied territories as part of a

future Middle East peace deal. "They want to create a situation that cannot be reversed, they want to torpedo peace," he told Reuters.

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, who began a two-day visit to Israel Monday, has called Jewish settlement in the occupied territories an obstacle to peace. Israel promised the United States, its main source of diplomatic and financial support, that it will not direct immigrants to the occupied territories but has made no commitment not aid those who chose to settle there.

A housing ministry statement did not dispute the latest figures, saying only that the plans were in accordance with the law and government policy.

As well as housing ministry assistance for West Bank and Gaza sites, at least one settlement — Kiryat Arba — has an office of the ministry of immigrant absorption and another branch is planned for the settlement of Ariel. The housing ministry is headed by Ariel Sharon, the hawkish former defence minister and architect of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

Mr. Sharon on Sunday

announced his resignation from the ministerial committee overseeing the wave of immigration that brought 185,000 Soviet Jews to Israel in 1990 and is expected to bring some 300,000 more this year.

Mr. Sharon, who keeps the housing portfolio, said he was quitting the immigration committee chair because of lack of support from Mr. Shamir.

The immigrant housing plan showed at least 387 mobile homes already in place, with some already occupied and other families due to move in by April.

Fearful of international criticism, including the danger that Moscow might stop the flow of emigrants if they settle in the occupied territories, settlement officials have repeatedly played down their numbers.

A recent statement by the Jewish Agency, the main institution handling immigration, said: "Practically no Soviet immigrants chose to settle in the occupied territories."

An unofficial tally compiled by Reuters from figures supplied by settlers shows some 2,500 Soviet immigrants now living in the occupied territories.

Syria hails U.S. stand on Mideast

DAMASCUS (R) — Syria praised the United States Tuesday for the first time in years for a "positive" stand on the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The official daily Tishreen in a front-page editorial hailed what it called progress in Washington's Middle East policy, after the Gulf war which allied both countries against Iraq.

"The joining of the United States to the group of those calling for an international conference constitutes in itself an important progress, especially as Israel strongly objects to a conference and was capable in the past of drawing obstacles to organising it by exerting pressure on Washington," it said.

It was the first such praise by Syria of Washington's policy in years.

The positive comments came a day before U.S. Secretary of State James Baker was scheduled to visit Damascus for talks with President Hafez Al Assad on post-war Gulf security.

Mr. Baker, on a 10-day mission to the Middle East, Turkey and the Soviet Union, is carrying a broad proposal to establish a new regional defence arrangement, foster economic cooperation, halt arms proliferation and resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Syria's anti-Iraq stand in the war has helped Damascus — isolated for years after being listed by the United States as a supporter of "international terrorism" — to regain a leading role in the Arab World.

Tishreen said the meeting between Mr. Baker and eight Arab foreign ministers in Riyadh over the weekend formed a "fruitful and healthy start," for joint Arab action.

It said a statement issued after the meeting saw that the convening of an international peace conference under U.N. auspices as "a suitable framework for ending the Israeli occupation of Arab territory and guaranteeing the rights of the Palestinian people."

Tishreen said Mr. Baker's position in joining Arab demands for the implementation of U.N. Resolution 425 calling for Israeli withdrawal from South Lebanon "constitutes an important step."

Israel has set up a 15-kilometre deep self-declared security zone since 1985 on the ground of protecting its northern borders from guerrilla attacks.

The eight Arab states represented in Riyadh, all members of the anti-Iraq coalition, were Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar. Only Egypt has made peace with Israel.

The eight allies also signed a post-Gulf war agreement last week forming a peacekeeping force in the Gulf, consisting mainly of Syrian and Egyptian troops.

"The international consensus to find a just and comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict is enhanced with the clear call by American President George Bush to find a solution to the Middle East conflict," Tishreen said.

It said the positive American stand was the result of a meeting between Mr. Assad and Mr. Bush in Geneva last November, the first Syrian-American summit in more than 11 years.

Both agreed to improve joint cooperation despite Washington's accusation that Syria was supporting "terrorism."

The official daily in a front-page commentary Monday accused Israel of undermining peace chances by reaffirming its rejection of an international conference and its desire to keep the occupied Arab territories.

It said Israel's stand would put the region on the verge of explosion.

U.S. ponders ways to increase military presence

WASHINGTON (AP) — 45-year-old U.S. military role in the Gulf will become decidedly larger in the wake of the Gulf war.

Post-war changes in the United States' low-key military presence in the Middle East may include American troop exercises, air force pilots using Arab airfields, even a permanent Saudi office for the army's central command.

"We are prepared to do more than we have in the past," Defence Secretary Dick Cheney told reporters last week. "The security system failed."

The character of a permanent U.S. presence is a sensitive issue in Saudi Arabia, where opponents say the monarchy would be bowing to Western colonial interests if it agrees to a heightened foreign military presence, and in other Gulf countries.

Based on analyses by current and retired military officials, some of the ways the United States could widen its role in the region's security system include:

— A few dozen air force fighters could train out of air bases in Saudi Arabia or other friendly Gulf nations for a few months at a time, leave and be replaced by another wing or squadron of U.S. planes.

— A small central command headquarters staff of 75-80 might remain in Riyadh, or elsewhere on the Arabian Peninsula. At the invitation of a friendly Arab country, the central command could assist in the coordination of joint training exercises, said a Defence Department official who spoke Monday on the condition of anonymity.

— American troops could conduct frequent military exercises in the Middle East, joined by Saudis and other friendly forces. Egypt and the United States conducted military exercises in the 1980s called Bright Star.

— The United States could put enough gear in the Middle East to equip an armoured division or a mechanised infantry division, several military analysts suggested. The U.S. military could simply leave some of its gear behind after leaving.

Thatcher: Israel, Arabs must achieve peace

DALLAS, Texas, (R) — Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said Monday that the allied win in the Gulf conflict had provided Israel and the Arab states with the best chance in years to achieve a lasting peace between them.

She said the United States and its allies' "devastating" action to halt "the aggression of the strong against the weak gives this area the best chance for a long time to achieve a secure peace."

Mrs. Thatcher made the remarks in a speech to an audience of 2,000 people, she was in Texas to visit her son Mark.

Mrs. Thatcher warned that coalition nations which joined forces to oust Iraqi troops from Kuwait could not themselves impose a settlement to resolve centuries of regional hostilities.

— The navy could station more ships in and near the Gulf. Before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, four or five U.S. ships were assigned there.

An aircraft carrier battle group and shipboard marine units would operate more closely to the Gulf than they have in the past, suggested Harlan Ullman. The former navy officer is now at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

Whatever the United States and the Gulf nations decide, most of the burden of a regional security force will be borne by Mideast nations. While half a million U.S. troops are coming home, 38,500 Egyptians will remain on the Arabian Peninsula, forming the core of a permanent force.

The United States has long had a military presence in the Gulf region, but it has never been major.

"They loved us as long as we were invisible," recalls retired Rear Adm. Eugene Carroll. He was a navigator aboard one of the few U.S. ships patrolling the Gulf in the 1950s.

The airfield at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia, was built by the United States in World War II as a staging area for cargo heading for the Burma theatre.

After World War II, the United States completed the airfield as an expression of support for the Saudi monarchy. Washington wanted to ensure continued access to the world's largest pool of oil reserves, said Mike Palmer of the Naval Historical Centre, while the Saudis saw the move as a symbol of American support.

A contingent of U.S. air force personnel was stationed in Dhahran in the 1950s, when the airport was a strategic air command base. Long-range bombers were to land there after making nuclear strikes against the Soviet Union.

U.S. fighter jets were stationed in Saudi Arabia in the early 1960s, when rebels were at work in neighbouring North Yemen. During the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, the air force dispatched radar-surveillance planes to Dhahran.

Lebanese army takes control of illegal ports

BEIRUT (AP) — Defence Minister Michel Murr said Lebanese troops took control of four illegal ports Tuesday, a move that blocks the flow of arms to militias and deprives them of a major source of revenue.

The government has announced that shipping operations in Lebanon will be confined to the state-run Beirut port as of March 15.

Ports seized by the troops included one in Beirut and another in suburban Dbayeh run by Christian militias and two in the southern suburbs of Khalede and Ouzai run by Shiite Muslim and Druze irregulars.

Illegal ports had stripped the government of \$100 million in customs revenues a year since the 1975 outbreak of the civil war, which helped drive the state treasury to the brink of bankruptcy.

The government has been moving to reestablish its authority that was eroded during the civil war through an Arab League-brokered peace plan to reunite the capital and its environs in a "greater Beirut" controlled by the army.

Another part of the plan was the withdrawal of militias with their heavy weapons from greater Beirut to their respective areas of influence in south, central and north Lebanon.

The plan also provides for disarming and disbanding all militias throughout Lebanon by March 21, a deadline many believe the government will not be able to meet.

The need was dramatised Tuesday when a landmine left over from the civil war exploded in the

Druze populated Beirut suburb of Shweifat, killing a man, his wife and daughter, police said.

Police also reported that a bodyguard of Christian warlord Elie Hobeika was wounded when a hand grenade he was trying with exploded near a Hobeika office in Beirut's residential district of Berjawi. Police said the blast was accidental.

Mr. Hobeika, who serves as state minister without portfolio in President Elias Hrawi's government, heads a pro-Syrian breakaway faction of the Lebanese Forces, the Christians' main militia.

A government statement issued Tuesday said a ministerial committee has been set up to propose ways for rehabilitating tens of thousands of militiamen for service with the army, police and other government departments.

The peace accord was worked out by the Lebanese parliament in a special session held under Arab League auspices in the Saudi Arabian resort town of Taif in October and September of 1989.

Mr. Hrawi's government has since introduced constitutional reforms to re-distribute power equally between Muslims and Christians.

The Christians dominated the government, parliament, army and the judiciary since Lebanon gained independence from France in 1943, when they were thought to be the majority.

The Muslims, who now make up 55 per cent of Lebanon's four million population, have been fighting for an equal power share.

Egypt expects to send more troops to Gulf

CAIRO (R) — Egypt, with 35,000 troops already in the Gulf, says it expects to send more soldiers and military equipment to police the region after U.S. and other Western forces withdraw.

"More troops will be needed and possibly the Egyptian air force will also deploy in the Gulf," a senior official, who asked not to be named, told Reuters.

He did not say how many more troops would be sent.

"It is not a matter of 30 or 40,000 men. It is to see what is needed to do the job. Artillery, tanks, warplanes and so on," the official, a former top officer said.

He added that Egypt, the second largest recipient of U.S. military and economic aid after Israel, would ask Washington for more warplanes and other equipment to boost its role in maintaining security and stability in the Gulf.

The White House notified Congress last week it will sell Egypt 46 F-16 C/D jet fighters and over 1,600 bombs and missiles worth \$1.6 billion. Egypt already has some 100 F-16 A/B warplanes.

The official said Egypt had two divisions in and around Kuwait

and was studying the deployment of more troops to Saudi Arabia and other Gulf Arab countries. Egypt, Syria and the six Gulf Arab states last week announced they would form a peacekeeping force to patrol the Gulf after non-Arab forces withdrew.

The proposed force will be made up mainly of Egyptians and Syrians. Damascus now has 20,000 soldiers in the Gulf.

Egypt, Washington's strongest Arab ally, has a well-equipped army of more than 400,000 men.

"You do not want to have a token show force in the Gulf. You need a real force with sufficient firepower able to act immediately in case a new threat arises," said the official.

Officials in Cairo said Iran did not pose a serious military threat to Gulf states after its army was drained in the 1980-88 war with Iraq.

"Iran is not a threat for years to come but a strong force is needed," the official added.

Egyptian officials and military experts say the oil-rich Gulf states might reward Egypt for its firm anti-Iraq stand by purchasing Egyptian-made air defence systems, armoured vehicles, communication systems and other hardware.

UNRWA director-general reports Palestinian hardships

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — The new commissioner-general of the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) said Tuesday there was "serious deterioration" in Palestinian income and that food shortages could develop.

After Turkmen, whose agency administers aid to Palestinian refugees, said on his first trip to the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip that economic problems were deepening among the occupied territories' residents.

"The most striking point is there is serious deterioration in the economic situation," said Mr. Turkmen, a former Turkish foreign minister who took over as head of UNRWA last week.

He told a news conference that the causes included Israel's seven-week curfew on the occupied territories, which came on top of the Palestinians' 39-month uprising.

The curfew, imposed by the army at the start of the Gulf war to prevent violence by pro-Iraqi Palestinians, has not yet been lifted despite the end of hostilities in the Gulf.

The curfew has prevented thousands of Arabs from getting

to their jobs in Israel and the occupied territories. Meanwhile, the uprising has cut into earning with frequent strikes, shortened shop hours and boycotts of Israeli-made goods.

"In some cases the food situation is becoming critical," Mr. Turkmen said.

He noted that UNRWA, which supervised aid programme for Palestinians, launched an emergency feeding programme in January for refugee camps and widened it last month to include families outside the camps.

But, he said, the food distribution programme was far behind schedule, in part because of difficulties coordinating with the Israeli army.

"The authorities have their security worries," Mr. Turkmen acknowledged. Still, he complained, the food programme had reached "only 50 per cent of what we were thinking to distribute by now."

Mr. Turkmen also complained that education "is completely suspended" for many students. Israel has ordered most Palestinian universities closed since the start of the uprising in December

1987 and has kept junior and senior high schools closed since mid-January.

Mr. Turkmen said he had met during his four-day visit with Israeli foreign ministry and army officials responsible for the occupied territories and had been promised cooperation.

He said that Israeli officials acknowledged the need for "more income-generating projects" in the West Bank and Gaza Strip but noted that funds for economic development were limited.

Mr. Turkmen took over as head of UNRWA from Giorgio Giacomelli of Italy, who headed the agency for more than five years.

UNRWA operates in the occupied territories as well as in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. There are a total of 2.1 million registered Palestinian refugees in the region. Mr. Turkmen also was to visit Jordan on his tour.

Mr. Turkmen, 63, foreign minister in the early 1990s, also served as his country's ambassador to the Soviet Union and the United Nations. Most recently, he was ambassador to France.

Airlines return to Gulf, shipping awaits Kuwait port updates

DUBAI (R) — Commercial airlines are returning to airports in the Gulf after a break of seven weeks because of the war with Iraq but passengers still face higher prices, airline officials said Tuesday.

Airlines flying to the Gulf have scrapped high insurance surcharges, which on some routes added \$500 to a ticket, after London underwriters reduced premiums.

But to passengers' dismay, they have introduced a fuel surcharge of six to nine per cent of the ticket value.

This was adopted by international carriers last November after jet fuel prices soared due to military demand, but it was not added to ticket at the time.

Shipping agents say Gulf ports are mainly back to normal but they await situation reports on Kuwaiti harbours.

"You have to know whether you will be using Kuwaiti ports, or whether you have to truck or barge the equipment needed for the reconstruction (of Kuwait)

from other Gulf ports," a shipping company executive in the Gulf said.

Shipping sources said Kuwait's Shuaiba port could be operational by the end of this month, but the exact date could be determined in the next few days once U.S. construction company Bechtel has inspected damage to the port and facilities.

During the Iraqi occupation a grain ship was sunk and the port was mined and polluted with oil. The sources were unsure if the cranes used to offload cargo were operational.

Although war risk insurance rates have come down, shipping traffic has not yet risen significantly because of a lag between orders from the region and the time needed to sail to the Gulf.

"There was no major danger to shipping in the Gulf during the war except for mines," one source said. "All the ports in the Gulf, except the ones in Kuwait and Iraq, are operational."

The sources said they expect the Saudi ports of Jubail and

Dammam to be congested in the next couple of months as U.S. military equipment is shipped home.

The Bahrain-based Middle East Navigation Aids Service has not issued a mine warning since Feb. 20, although Western and Saudi navies are still searching for mines sown by Iraq in the central and northern Gulf.

Underwriters in London last week cut cargo insurance rates to ports in the southern and central Gulf, including Qatar and Bahrain, to 0.075 to 0.10 per cent of cargo value, compared to around 0.5 per cent in the last week of the crisis.

Hull insurance rates, which rose by more than seven per cent during the war, have also dropped significantly, but no single figure was available as rates are negotiated for each journey.

All but one of the 53 airlines which used the southern city of Dubai, one of the busiest airports in the region, stopped flights to the emirate when the war started Jan. 17.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

PRAYER TIMES	
06:28	Fajr
05:45	(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:45	Dhuhr
15:46	'Asr
17:45	Maghreb
19:02	Isha
CHURCHES	
St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swellish, Tel. 810740	
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785	
St. Joseph Church Tel. 645900	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440	
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757	
Terraviva Church Tel. 622366	
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541	
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628543	
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331	
WEATHER	
Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.	
It will be partly cloudy and rainy at times. Temperatures will drop gradually and winds will be from the southwesterly fresh. In Amman, it will be partly cloudy with southerly fresh winds and rough seas.	
	Min./max. temp.
Amman	5 / 23
Aqaba	12 / 23
Deserts	5 / 15

Jordan Valley 11 / 20
Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 15, Aqaba 26. Humidity readings: Amman 84 per cent, Aqaba 24 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS
NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Khalidoun Klobi 826919
Dr. Adel Dabbous 612177
Dr. Khalid Abdul Odeh 753592
Dr. Saad Abu Hatab 698946
Firas Pharmacy 661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asma pharmacy 637055

Nairoukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yasoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

IRBID:
Dr. Kamal Al Najjar (—)
Al Sharaa pharmacy (275825)

ZARQA:
Dr. Hisham Sharbut (—)
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate

Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 02111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 63621
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage

Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 625101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 721111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS
AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/232
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhus, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 664171/4
Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845
Al-Musader Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Islamic, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775112/6
Amay, Marfa 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602340/50
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)833323
Zarqa Catholic Hospital (09)991071
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
IRBID:
Princess Beama Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272229
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)267100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

MARKET PRICES
Upper/lower price in fils per kg.
Banana 500 / 450

Banana (Mukammal) 450 / 400
Beans 750 / 650
Cabbage 100 / 60
Carrot 180 / 120
Cauliflower 200 / 150
Cucumbers (large) 420 / 360
Cucumbers (small) 500 / 400
Dates 230 / 160
Eggplant 900 / 500
Garlic 240 / 200
Grapefruit 280 / 220
Lemon 100 / 50
Lettuce (per one) 100 / 50
Marrow (large) 200 / 150
Marrow (small) 340 / 280
Onion (dry) 280 / 220
Onion (green) 160 / 120
Pumpkin 600 / 340
Pepper (hot) 500 / 400
Pepper (sweet) 250 / 200
Potato 240 / 180
Radish 100 / 50
Sage 400 / 300
Spinach 120 / 80
Tomatoes 340 / 250

هذا من الجبل

Jordan, China discuss environmental issues

AMMAN (J.T.) — China's Ambassador to Jordan Zhang Liang discussed with Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Mohammad Al Zaben Jordan's participation in a Peking conference on the environment and development which will be held at the ministerial level in June.

The meeting in Peking is to pave the ground for a 1992 international conference on the environment and development which will be organised under the United Nations auspices, according to ministry officials.

The Peking conference is expected to focus attention on issues related to the environment in the developing world along with questions related to the transfer of modern technology to provide protection to the environment from pollution, means of financing and increasing international cooperation in areas related to the environment and development, the sound utilisation of natural resources as well as advanced nations' assistance to the Third World to achieve the goal," the officials said.

The minister was quoted by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, as

saying that the Third World countries will be holding contacts over subjects to be taken up at the Peking conference and issues of common concern.

He said that the advanced nations shoulder a grave responsibility towards stemming pollution and helping the developing nations solve their environmental problems.

He stressed that there should be no restrictions on the transfer of modern technology to the Third World and there must be a greater degree of international cooperation in ways of safeguarding the world's environment.

Jordan joined 55 countries from around the world in an international conference on the protection of the ozone layer which was held in London last June.

Ministers responsible for environmental affairs in these countries agreed on amendments to an agreement to protect the earth's ozone layer from being depleted by man-made chemicals. The ministers agreed to phase out ozone destroying chlorofluorocarbons by the year 2000 and to establish the world's first environmental fund.

Amman municipality staff meet, tackle future plans

AMMAN (J.T.) — The first annual conference of Greater Amman Municipality staff was concluded Monday after discussing two working papers, presented by Anas Qattan, the municipality's assistant under secretary for planning affairs and Nabih Subeimar, director of Abdali area, according to a report in the Arabic daily Sawt Al Shaab.

The first paper dealt with aspirations, plans of action and methods of work of the different municipal departments.

The first paper focussed on the need to achieve decentralisation in a serious bid to save the citizens time and efforts and to address their problems on the spot without having to go through the red tape.

Mr. Qattan noted that the Planning Department had established a special section, in each of the 20 areas of the municipality, to discuss the organisational problems of all the areas and make the subsequent necessary recommendations.

Mr. Qattan also made some

recommendations on means of developing the work of the Licensing Department and the various sanctions attached to it. On the department's plans for the year 1991, Mr. Qattan said it would finalise the technical framework of the municipality's law, undertake a demographic survey aimed at updating data for the comprehensive development plan of greater Amman.

"The municipality's plans will not allow the expansion of construction at the expense of agricultural land and forests," Mr. Qattan said.

The second working paper touched upon methods of enhancing efficiency of maintenance teams, by increasing the number of workers and allocating more equipment to such teams, taking into considerations the priorities set by each area.

The paper called for strengthening coordination between the municipality and other government agencies concerned, particularly the Water and Sewerage Department, in drawing up specific strategies for drilling works.

Ramadan regulations must be observed

AMMAN (J.T.) — During the holy month of Ramadan, which is expected to begin by March 17, strict observance must be made of regulations concerning fasting during day hours, according to Amman Governor Jawdat Fabsoul.

He said that the following regulations have to be strictly observed: All restaurants and cafes are to be closed during fasting hours and they cannot open until only two hours before the time of breakfast in the evening to prepare food.

All liquor stores, bars and nightclubs will be closed, except those that exist within the four or five star hotels which should only serve foreign tourists and guests inside their rooms.

Smoking is banned in the streets, public places and all types of means of transport.

— All stands and kiosks selling juice, sandwiches and snacks will remain closed during the fasting hours of the day.

— Restaurants can sell food for customers to be taken home and not eaten inside restaurants.

— Government resthouses can continue to offer food and refreshments to the tourist groups visiting Jordan.

— The government had earlier announced that government offices will open between 9:30 in the morning and until 2:00 p.m. during the month of Ramadan. The University of Jordan's official hours during Ramadan will be from 9:00 am. and until 3:00 p.m. according to university president Mahmoud Al Samra. Tuesday, Mr. Samra said that staff at Jordan University Hospital, the library and maintenance services will follow special arrangements during the month of Ramadan.

JNRCS team leaves for Baghdad

AMMAN (J.T.) — A team from the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) led by the society's Vice President Mohammad Mutlaq Al Hadid left for Baghdad Tuesday to discuss relief operations and the Iraqi people's needs with Ibrahim Al Nouri, head of the Iraqi National Red Crescent Society, and other officials.

Consultations on facilitating and coordinating the arrival of relief supplies with the Iraqi society will be discussed by Mr. Hadid and his group who are

expected to tour a number of Iraqi society's relief centres. Mr. Hadid's visit follows the arrival in Baghdad Tuesday of 115 tonnes of medicines and children food from JNRCS.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Tuesday sent 33 trucks laden with 600 tonnes of relief supplies to Iraq from Madaba, South of Amman. It was announced Tuesday that a convoy of trucks carrying 50 tonnes of food supplies left for Baghdad. The gift was raised in Madaba district by local organisations.

WHAT'S GOING ON EXHIBITION

★ Comprehensive book exhibition at the Royal Cultural Centre, Amman.

BAZAAR

★ Charity bazaar at Nusseib Islamic Cultural Centre, Zarqa.

★ Charity bazaar at the women's Islamic Cultural Centre, Karak.



MASRI RECEIVES MOROCCAN ENVOY: Morocco's Ambassador designate to Jordan Mohammad Nabati Tuesday presented a copy of his credentials to Foreign Minister Taher Al Masri. Mr. Nabati, who succeeds Abdul Latif Laraki to the post, had assumed a number of ambassadorial missions for his country since 1974 when he was ambassador of Morocco in Qatar. Mr. Nabati also

served at the Arab League headquarters, the Moroccan Foreign Ministry and the Organisation of Islamic Conference. Mr. Nabati's predecessor, Mr. Laraki, who served as ambassador here since 1982, has been transferred to Cairo. Mr. Nabati is still to formally present his credentials to His Majesty King Hussein at the Royal Court.

Brotherhood sees multi-party system as solution to problems in Iraq

By Mariam M. Shahin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan says it has been closely watching the ongoing events in the southern regions of Iraq in the wake of the Gulf war and is urging the Iraqi government to opt for a multi-party system to help end the current disturbances and prevent the country from total collapse.

"If the Iraqi government wants to defuse the present explosive situation," the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan believes that the door must be thrown wide open for all political groups in Iraq to come forward and take part in the government in a democratic manner," said the group's official spokesman, Ziad Abu Ghanima.

"We believe that the single greatest weapon that the current government of Iraq has right now is to open the doors to democracy and thus prove null and void the interference of its enemies who are using the frustrations of the opposition groups in order to destroy Iraq from within," Abu Ghanima, told the Jordan Times.

The continuation of a one-party rule under the Baathists, Abu Ghanima said, will only weaken Iraq in the long run since "it would lay the ground work for

opposition parties which could albeit unintentionally hurt Iraq's national interests."

Despite this criticism, Abu Ghanima did not express open support for the rebels in southern and northern Iraq.

"We call on the opposition parties to consider the special circumstances in which they find themselves and consider the national interests of Iraq," he said.

"It is the Americans and the Zionists and their 'coalition partners' that will benefit from the divisions in Iraq, no one else," Abu Ghanima said.

But Abu Ghanima also stressed that the Iraqi government must address the long standing grievances of banned political parties in Iraq, the Islamic parties in particular.

While many critics of the Muslim Brotherhood claim that the brotherhood supported Iraq in the Gulf crisis for the most part because "the man in the street supported Iraq and the party did not want to lose its constituency," Abu Ghanima says otherwise. "The Muslim Brotherhood has been banned in Iraq, banned and persecuted. But in the moment of need we stood with Iraq because the interest of the nation as a whole came first," he said.

According to Abu Ghanima the brotherhood has historically put national interests before party interests in times of outside aggression. Citing the example of Egypt, Abu Ghanima said Jamal Abdul Nasser was "our greatest persecutor but the moment the Americans and Zionists aggressed Egypt we stood on Abdul Nasser's side because the nation comes first."

A brotherhood delegation met for the first time with Saddam Hussein and members of his government during the Gulf crisis and discussed, among other things, the future of their brethren in Iraq. "We stressed that if Iraq leaves Kuwait the coalition partners will no longer have an excuse to attack Iraq and we asked that Islamic parties be given the freedom to operate freely in Iraq," Abu Ghanima said.

"Nothing has happened yet, but five members of the brotherhood who had been on death row were given a personal pardon by Saddam Hussein," Abu Ghanima said.

The position of the brotherhood towards the rebelling Muslim parties in the south, which are Shiites and not as the brotherhood Sunni Muslims, leaves the door open to a future role both with the current government and the rebels.

Palestinian council to debate peace efforts

By Jamal Halaby
Associated Press Writer

AMMAN — Senior Palestinian leaders plan to meet and discuss Arab-Israeli peace efforts in the aftermath of the Gulf war, an official said Tuesday.

The speaker of the Palestine National Council (PNC), Sheikh Abdul Hamid Sayeh, said the Palestine Central Council was tentatively due to meet later this month in Tunisia.

Sheikh Sayeh said no date has been set, but he said the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) was preparing an agenda for the 92-member council, which helps guide PLO policy between meetings of the larger PNC.

The central council had been due to meet last August, but Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait and the resulting Gulf war forced a postponement of that plan.

"Many rapid developments have taken place during the past few months... and we want to know where we stand and what could be done to settle the Palestinian problem," Sayeh told the Associated Press.

"The meeting will focus on events which have taken place in Iraq and world discussions on settling the Arab-Israeli dispute."

Sayeh said that the council will also discuss Palestinian representation in any further Arab-Israeli peace talks.

The PLO's sympathy towards Iraq in the Gulf war has led the United States and its Arab allies to speak of trying to bypass the PLO, or at least its current leadership, in peace discussions.

U.S. Secretary of State James Baker is currently touring the region to explore possibilities of reviving Arab-Israeli peace efforts.

"Some sides are trying to distance the PLO from representing Palestinians, but our people have chosen this organization to be their sole and legitimate representative," Sayeh said.

"It will remain as such so long as our people wants it to be," he added.

Symposium appraises activity of Friends of Traffic Police Society

AMMAN (Petra) — Public Security Department (PSD) Director Maj. Gen. Fadel Ali Fuhaid Tuesday said that traffic poses one of the most important challenges facing the Jordanian society, and called for intensifying efforts to fend off its dangers and put an end to the bloodshed resulting from it.

Addressing a symposium held Tuesday at the Traffic Department to discuss philosophy and objectives of the Friends of the Traffic Police Society, Maj. Gen. Fuhaid praised the efforts made by the society members saying that their cooperation with the traffic police in detecting and reporting traffic violations reflects their interest in safeguarding the safety and security of citizens.

He voiced hope that the Friends of Traffic Police Society will serve as a pilot experiment which could be applied in various

governorates and districts of Jordan, after assessing its impact and results.

Maj. Gen. Fuhaid criticised certain segments of the Jordanian society who violate traffic regulations and who defy the security regulations by firing live ammunition during celebrations and weddings thus killing people.

He pointed out that the PSD is contemplating the establishment of a society similar to the Friends of the Traffic Police Society, with the aim of assisting public security men in controlling security violations on certain social occasions.

Also addressing the symposium was Chairman of the Jordanian Society for the Prevention of Road Accidents Zuhair Malhas who said that the society maintains excellent cooperation with the PSD.

Mr. Malhas said that it was

hightime to organise and control traffic, given the fact that Jordan has now more than 250,000 cars running along its roads.

"Since it is impossible to provide a traffic policeman in all cases and circumstances, it has become incumbent on all citizens to cooperate in controlling traffic violations, be they dangerous violations or otherwise," he said.

The Traffic Police Department Director Col. Ahmad Al Dumour landed the idea of establishing the Friends of Traffic Police Society, saying that it creates relations between the police and the public. He added that traffic problems are major cause for loss of life, injuries and damage to property.

The establishment of the society was aimed at bringing accidents to the bare minimum and alleviating the suffering caused by traffic accidents.

Queen Noor inaugurates businesswomen's projects

By a Jordan Times
Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein, the honorary chairperson of the Business and Professional Women's Club (BPWC) inaugurated the club's new building and the three projects implemented by it, Tuesday. BPWC's President Hind Abdul Jaber welcomed Queen Noor in an opening speech and expressed appreciation of Her Majesty's interest in women's development and her support of the BPWC. Abdul Jaber also indicated in her speech the various issues which concern Jordanian women such as unemployment, different social problems that arose from the current events in the region. She also commended the steadfastness and sacrifices of the Iraqi and Palestinian women.

Abdul Jaber explained the role of the club's Board of Directors' three projects and their contribution to the success of the projects.

During the inauguration Naila Al Rashdan, the head of the

Legal Committee, presented the objectives of legal counselling for women project. She said that the project aimed at providing women with legal aid and conducting activities to increase women's awareness of their legal rights and duties and the ways to amend laws in women's favour.

Al Rashdan also said that the project provided legal counselling and representation for women in courts. Another aim of the project is to provide social, family and psychological counselling for women.

A second project was presented by Nisreen Toukan, the manager of the Small Business Counselling for Women. She identified the objective of the project as one that would encourage women to establish small productive projects which would create employment opportunities for other women.

She also said that such projects would create productive investments beneficial to society at large. Mr. Toukan explained that the project had finished the first

two stages of data collection and planning of services and had embarked on the delivery of services to actual and potential women entrepreneurs.

Another speaker, who presented the third project, was Salwa Nasser, president of the Information and Documentation Centre for Women's Studies. Mrs. Nasser said that the project came as part of the five-year plan regarding women sectors in coordination with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

The BPWC established in 1967, is a centre for Jordanian women. It was established in order to introduce women as an effective working force in the community. It was also aimed at finding workable solutions for Middle Eastern women so as they take a proper role in society.

The centre provided researchers evaluation data on women and their role in society.

Her Majesty toured the centre at the end of her visit and examined the level of services the centre provided to its participants



Her Majesty Queen Noor Tuesday inaugurates the new building of the Business and Professional Women's Club. The club's president, Hind Abdul

Jaber, welcomes Her Majesty in an opening speech (Petra photo)

12% of the total workforce in Jordan is employed in the agricultural sector

JCO intent on ensuring food security in the country

By Salim Maani
Petra

AMMAN — The Jordan Cooperative Organisation (JCO) is playing a major role in the process of transforming Jordan from a mere consuming society into a well-organised and productive nation by boosting the work of agricultural cooperative societies around the Kingdom, according to JCO Director General Jamal Lebdour.

"For Jordan, the agricultural sector is one of the most important sectors in the country as it serves as a source of income for no less than 20 per cent of the total population," Mr. Lebdour said.

"The agricultural sector employs 12 per cent of the total Jordanian workforce and serve as the main contributor for ensuring food security for the country," he added.

The JCO has been striving to promote this sector through its 213 agricultural cooperative societies around the country, according to Mr. Lebdour.

He said that out of nearly 51,000 people involved in the work of cooperatives in the King-

dom's various sector, nearly 17,000 are affiliated to the agricultural cooperatives and together these agricultural societies produce 80 per cent of the country's fresh milk, 100 per cent of the table eggs in addition to considerable quantities of cereals, vegetables, fruits and olives.

Mr. Lebdour said that the Jordanian agricultural cooperative societies together own 12,163 heads of cattle and 355,286 heads of sheep. To help these societies increase their production, the JCO ensured loans and grants totalling some JD 31.7 million between 1979 and 1989.

"This year, the agricultural cooperative societies are intensifying their efforts to increase production of wheat, barely, chick peas and lentils which are on great demand on the local markets and form a strategic food commodity," Mr. Lebdour said.

He said that the agricultural cooperative societies are cultivating nearly 37,000 dunums of land this year, up from around 16,000 dunums in 1989, in order to increase food production.

According to Mr. Lebdour, the JCO has now set up four new stations in Mafraq, Diban,

Tafleh and Shobak to offer maintenance services to farming equipment and tractors and to help farmers sow seeds and spray pesticides or prepare fields for cultivation.

"To provide additional amounts of water, the JCO has reached agreement with the Ministry of Water and Irrigation on the recycling of treated waste water for the irrigation of lands to be grown with animal feed, Mr. Lebdour said.

"The JCO has recently set up cooperatives among bedouin settlements to help settle the bedouins and increase their production in the north regions, Mr. Lebdour pointed out.

"To help grazing, the JCO is supervising taking charge of six rascals in Main, Bani Hamideh, Madaba, Lejoun and Eel," he added.

The JCO, he said, is constantly supplying farmers with farming equipment, seeds and pesticides at reasonable cost and has been purchasing the output at very high prices to encourage further production. Mr. Lebdour said that JCO this year paid JD 1.38 million for its cereals produced by the agricultural cooperative societies.

Algerian doctors, specialists dedicated to helping Iraqis

By Odeh Odeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Algerian Medical Association plans to send 100 doctors, specialists and female nurses to Iraq where they will arrive in the coming few days to offer treatment to the victims of the U.S.-led aggression on Iraq, according to the association's President Jamal Weld Abbas.

"Through my contacts with Iraq's minister of health and the Iraqi Medical Association, I learnt that at least 500 nurses and 50 specialists will be needed for the surgical operations going on in Iraqi hospitals," Weld Abbas said in a statement to the Jordan

Times and Al Ra'i after his arrival here from Baghdad.

"The Iraqi people in general and the children under three years of age in particular are facing famine and possible death in view of the shortages in food and medical supplies resulting from the Gulf war," said Weld Abbas.

"During the war, only nurses and doctors from Algeria, Jordan and Palestine took part in essential work to provide assistance to the victims, while the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was absent from the scene," said Weld Abbas.

"The Algerian doctors will continue to provide help and they have already sent three missions of doctors and nurses with food supplies, medicine and medical

equipment to Baghdad," Weld Abbas said.

"The association has collected six tonnes of medicine, which went as a gift to Iraq, and is covering the cost of stationing hundreds of doctors and nurses in Iraqi cities," he added.

In addition, the Algerian people, including doctors and other professionals, have to date collected 600 tonnes of food supplies, especially children's milk, that went to Iraq, according to Weld Abbas.

Weld Abbas, who is on his way back to Algeria to pursue efforts for more aid to Iraq, called for the formation of a pan-Arab committee designed to help reconstruct Iraq.

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Economic Forum

New era: New economic strategies

By Dr. Abdalla Malki

THE way the Gulf crisis ended indicates that the United States will tighten its grip on world affairs. Bad as that may be in so many respects, it might have a positive outcome in economic terms. Already, the world is slowly drifting towards globalisation of markets as national economic borders melt away. The multinational corporations set the stage for this trend; the success of the European Common Market gave it a boost and the fall of European socialism has brightened its prospects.

A global economic is necessarily based on the philosophy of market economy where economic freedom reigns. Economic liberalisation is now sweeping through the second and third worlds, under the banner of organisations such as the International Monetary Fund. The United States is the back stage player which oversees, and where necessary will hereafter dictate, the pace and direction of the events.

The results of the Gulf crisis and war suggest that the Middle East area will sooner or later be a part of the new economic world order. Of course, some Mideastern countries, particularly the Gulf states, are already free open economies. The growing American influence in this area will be used to push and ensure

the movement of others in the same direction.

The biggest leverage in this regard is the astronomical costs of reconstruction in the area which dwarf its financial resources to the extent that outside aid has to be called in. Estimates on reconstruction costs of Kuwait started from \$10 billion two months ago and mounted up to \$40 billion at the eve of the ground war to jump to \$100 billion a week ago. A report in the Financial Times has just put the figure at \$200 billion. Iraq's reconstruction costs might be as high or even higher. And do not forget Saudi Arabia. The overall figure might run up to something between \$400-\$500 billion. The combined daily oil production of Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates in July 1990, that is the month preceding the crisis, reached around 13 million barrels. At an average of \$18 per barrel, that translates into \$234 million a year. The portion of this income which will be spared for investment or reconstruction cannot exceed the average propensity to save which averages a maximum of 25 per cent in developing countries. This means that the oil producing Arab Gulf states need 20-25 years to pay for reconstruction costs on top of the defence burdens. But it also means that this task is

practically beyond their capabilities and this is why foreign aid must be called in.

Such aid will have to come mainly from countries like the U.S., Germany and Japan. Most of it will have to be channelled through the World Bank and IMF or similar institutions established for this purpose. This is exactly the point where the opportunity rises to navigate the whole Middle East area into the straits of the new economic world order. The Gulf states have already been stressing the point that any assistance they might give to other Arab countries which are members of the coalition against Iraq must be channelled through IMF and under its mechanism based on the conditions of adjustment policies which lead, of course, to market economies.

Fortunately, the transformation of the world into a global free economy is not a bad thing, especially when the gap between the very poor and very rich is seriously addressed in the context and spirit of the one global family of nations. Here, the countries of the Middle East must capture the spirit of this new era and rewrite their development strategies and economic policies. Democracy and economic freedom are the name of the new game.

The new sideshow

U.S. MEDIA are all of a sudden putting the squeeze once again on Damascus after playing up reports that Syria is now supplying its armed forces with newer models of Scud missiles imported from North Korea. Surely the U.S. government — and most probably some media people as well — knew well in advance that Syria did not take the Gulf crisis as an opportunity to disarm or stop supplying its army with the latest weapon systems needed for its defence. But it seems credible that Washington decided to maintain silence on continuing Syrian armament till the Gulf war was over before raising the issue publicly and forcefully. So, first, it only took a few hours after Israel sounded alarm bells about the arrival of new Scud missiles to Syria for the Americans to echo the same sentiments and "sense of danger." Then, several days later, President Bush's spokesman, no less, attacked Syria on another front. When White House Press Secretary Marlin Fitzwater was asked yesterday about a March 10 report by CBS Television on Syria's alleged record on torture, his reply was: "I think that's the part of the show that was skewed. There has been no change in our policy towards Syria. They remain on the terrorist list. I don't think anybody has illusions about Assad and his actions over the last many years." Fitzwater went on to say that everyone is familiar with Amnesty International's documentation of the "atrocities that have occurred there."

The Americans are at it again. Hardly several months after Syria joined some other Arab countries in the coalition that fought Iraq, Damascus itself has become the target of U.S. allegation that it is not only a major perpetrator of torture but also runs a school on torture! The question that comes to mind is whether targeting Syria now is a prelude to some concerted action by Washington similar to that vicious campaign launched against Iraq last April. Israel cannot be too far behind this new campaign against Syria, just like it was not when President Saddam Hussein threatened to burn half of Israel if the Jewish state attacked Iraq during that month.

It is a well-known fact that Iraq was concerned and subjected to a savage and catastrophic war basically because it constituted a regional power that did not tally with Washington's posture in the Gulf and Middle East regions. With Iraq out of the way, is it not probable that Syria will be also concerned in due course just like Iraq was and then made the object of another onslaught against another Arab country simply because it poses a military threat to Israel and because of its human rights record.

At a time when all attention is focused on peace efforts, in light of the emergence of "new thinking" in the area, it is not easy to talk about and dwell on side issues that do not help the cause of making progress on the peace front and bringing about reconciliation. But it is always important to remember that the Gulf crisis, in our opinion, started long before the Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait and that it was ignited by media reports against the Arab country and regime like that which appeared in CBS' "60 Minutes" on March 10. In April it was Israel plus the West, mainly American and British, media against Iraq. Today, it is the first combine against Syria. Tomorrow, what happens is anybody's guess.

It is well and good that the U.S. government and media are interested in furthering democracy and human rights everywhere. They should. What we have to warn against, though, is that if the Americans are really serious and willing to bring about peace to the Middle East, their effort should not be derailed by those who can rock the boat, and who have made spreading the poison their business and goal.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily Tuesday described the statement by the Gulf Cooperation Council's foreign ministers and those of Syria, Egypt and the United States as containing positive elements because it underlines the need for respect of the international legitimacy. The statement, issued at the end of these ministers' meeting in Saudi Arabia called for the solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, which means calling on Israel to abide by these resolutions and pull out its forces from the occupied Arab territories, the paper noted. But while the statement emphasises the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of any Arab state, it describes the current Iraqi government's measures to deal with minorities in the south as suppression, the paper noted. It said that the foreign ministers should not have marred their statement by attacking Iraq, neither should they have ignored mentioning the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Palestinian people and their ongoing struggle to end occupation of the Arab territories. The achievement of peace in the region, as referred to in the statement cannot materialise without the full participation of the people and their representatives and their governments, the paper noted.

Sawt Al Shaab Arabic daily said that President Bush's initiative to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of U.N. Security Council resolutions cannot see the light and can only be considered as a political manoeuvre unless it is backed by action. The paper said that many Arabs believe that the initiative came at a time when the U.S. administration was trying hard to contain the Arab masses rage over America's aggression on Iraq, and they need action not mere words. The current U.S. moves to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict, said the paper, has already drawn Israel's instant rejection although this initiative is based on international legitimacy and the Security Council resolutions. The paper said that James Baker has already heard this rejection which came as no surprise to us because it was not the first rejection by Israel of U.S. and other initiatives.

Soviet weaknesses exposed in Gulf war not easy to fix

By Michael Putzel

WASHINGTON — The Gulf war exposed weaknesses in Soviet weaponry that will be difficult to correct and may well cost the Soviet security at home and precious cash from arms sales abroad.

When the brief conflict ended, the battlefield was littered with burning tanks, artillery and evidence everywhere that the Iraq's Soviet-built weapons were no match for western technology. Kremlin Defence Minister Dmitri Yezov hastily announced a review of the Soviet's entire air defence system.

But experts in military technology and Soviet economics agree there is little the Kremlin can do, certainly not for a long time, to overcome the failures put on display for the world to see in the six-week war.

The war undoubtedly wounded the international market for

Soviet hardware, a critical source of foreign currency. Arms sales rank second only to oil as a source of convertible currency for the Soviets.

"Typically, their hard currency earnings were about \$30 to \$32 billion a year, of which oil was about half, or a little more, and weapons sales were about a quarter," said Charles Wolf, an economist at the Rand Corp. private research group.

From the first minutes of the war, U.S. aircraft slipped undetected past Iraqi radar to knock out the "eyes" of their enemy and render much of the dangerous Soviet-made hardware useless.

In the end, the Iraqis lost 1,100 tanks for every one lost by the United States. More than 2,200 Iraqi artillery pieces were destroyed. Of the 23 U.S. planes shot down, all were hit by relatively primitive anti-aircraft weapons-Iraq's sophisticated planes and surface-to-air missiles

were out of commission.

The Gulf war essentially showed a technological gap between the superpowers that the Kremlin no longer has the resources to close.

Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, chief of the Soviet general staff in the late 1970s and early 1980s warned that the West was surging ahead in weapons technology while the Soviets concentrated on fielding massive ground forces.

Marshal Ogarkov has probably been looking at the Persian Gulf as the realisation of a nightmare," said Abraham Becker, director of the Rand-UCLA Centre for Soviet Studies.

The Soviet gained their superpower status by financing a huge military, largely at the expense of the civilian population, which was compelled to forgo modern health care, adequate housing and consumer goods. The Kremlin spends 16 per cent to 20 per cent of the country's gross nation-

al product on defence, compared with 6 per cent to 7 per cent in the United States.

With the centrally controlled economy now falling apart, there is little the Kremlin can do to finance an expensive course correction for the military.

"For a Soviet military leader to look around and say the Gulf proves we need all these wonderful gadgets and let's go out and get them would be to ignore the vital connection between the military technology that produces those gadgets and the economic infrastructure and industrial capability that is necessary to produce the military technology," Becker said.

"They really have a fundamental obstacle, which they have not been able to deal with and which constitutes the bedrock problem they're facing," he explained. "To be able to do as the allies did in the Gulf, they really would have to revolutionise

their economy," and despite the reforms initiated by President Mikhail S. Gorbachev, "they haven't really done anything about the fundamental issues."

Wolf, the Rand economist, concluded that substantial cuts in military spending are essential. "They're in tough shape," Wolf said. "Gorbachev has some options, all of which are bad."

He added the Soviets may choose to reallocate funds already earmarked for the military to concentrate more on the "weak spots" Yezov mentioned. Indeed, there are indications they already had begun trimming funds from the navy, and they are slashing the size of their armies as they bring troops home from eastern Europe.

"The lesson of this war is that large numbers of even fairly good ordnance, artillery, tanks and so on won't do the job," said Raymond L. Garthoff, a former arms control negotiator and ex-

pert in military affairs at the Brookings Institution. He expects Soviet generals to argue they should put more money into developing high technology communications and intelligence gathering, night fighting capability and smart munitions.

Don Hicks, a former senior Defence Department official involved in weapons development, said the Soviet military has concentrated for decades on developing defences that didn't work in Iraq and aren't designed to counter the Stealth aircraft that took out Iraqi radar and missile sites at the start of the air war.

"The bottom line is, if they're really honest with themselves in their analysis, until they can handle Stealth, it doesn't matter what they do because their systems are going to be highly vulnerable to Stealth aircraft coming in the first strike," Hicks said.

Arab people want justice in region

By Adrian Hamilton

IF THE Gulf War was won in double-quick time, the peace looks as if it could be lost just as decisively. The very people who ought to be supporting in Iraq are being repressed by the Republican Guard without a squeak of protest from the victorious allies sitting but a few miles away. The Sabah family is being restored to Kuwait to the sound of shredded promises for democratic reform and the dull thud of beatings handed out to Palestinians. Yemenis or anyone deemed a "collaborator".

The plan for establishing peace and security in the region has come down to an Arab Gulf force with the dangerous addition of Syria and the exclusion of the region's most important player — Iran. Hopes of a Middle East peace conference have proved stillborn as even the French, sensing that this is no time to push against the U.S., have retreated from the idea. What was meant to be a victory for the United Nations has ended in what the Arabs always thought it would be: an irresistible demonstration of U.S. power and influence.

To say this is not to join in the chorus of anti-Americanism that has so undermined the anti-war case in the Gulf crisis. The problems have not arisen from some deep-laid plot by Washington to

rule the world or lower the price of oil, or give vent to the investments made in Star Wars, as the left would have it. The opposite is true. President Bush never had a clear peace policy. His political aim has been to win a decisive victory that would erase the memory of Vietnam, with the lowest possible allied casualties.

The peculiarity of this war was that it was fought by a country which no longer could pay for its own troops. Whatever the accusations against it, America has neither the resources nor the will to repeat this kind of venture. If anything, it would genuinely like to clear the board and sweep away with everything tidy behind it.

Yet to accept that U.S. intentions in the Gulf may be well-meant is not to say they are innocent. Of course, Washington has its own interests: its exclusive relationship with Saudi Arabia; its desire to ensure Israel's protection against any Arab military power; its determination to keep the Soviet Union, or indeed most European or Japanese, from competitive influence in the Gulf. The question for the peace is: having achieved its domestic political war aims, how hard is the U.S. going to pursue its international aims with the peace?

There is little point in denying the U.S. pre-eminence in this

matter. None of the potential dissenters — the Soviet Union, France and certainly not Britain — are in any mood to challenge Washington's immediate hegemony. Nor do they feel it wise to consider the contracts, the oil and the commerce to be dispensed after the victory.

That need not be a bad thing. American may be an interested victor but it is also a powerful one. The only nation able to field an army powerful enough to face down Saddam Hussein, it is also the only power able to face down Israel in the aftermath. Bush, and Secretary of State James Baker, are not like their predecessors. They owe no votes to the Israeli lobby nor do they now need to apologise to the government there.

Bush can, if he wishes, put enormous pressure on Yitzhak Shamir to start the peace process. The question is whether he is willing, if push comes to shove.

The Palestinian question is only half of the Middle East problem, however. The other is the Gulf, or what might more properly be called the question of oil wealth and its distribution. It is the issue persistently ignored by the West, and by commentators. Where Washington may be willing to tackle the Palestinian question, it is not willing to tackle the Gulf one. Its relationship with

Saudi Arabia, and the commitment to Syria as well as Egypt, leave it very little room for manoeuvre.

Long-term interest, and common humanity, might support any move to popular revolt, in southern Iraq or elsewhere. Saudi interests would prefer a continuation of Saddam's regime to anything that might smack Shi'ite resurgence. The Arabs in the coalition are far keener to exclude Iran from a post-war settlement than to seek genuine peace and security.

"Well, at least we've achieved a reversal of Iraq's aggression against Kuwait," said a senior British Minister recently. True, as far as it goes. But most people wanted something more than a restoration of the Sabahs. They had hoped allied soldiers might be working for some justice in the region.

If the West can make economic aid and international acceptance the carrot of democratic reform in Eastern Europe, why can it not do the same in Iraq where the economic problems are more desperate and the democratic urge all the more in need of outside encouragement? To ignore this now is to ensure that all the frictions which brought about this crisis will recur within the decade, only in an even less manageable or defeatable form — Observer.

Iran asserts role in the Gulf

By Shahrugh Akhavi
COLUMBIA, S.C.

IRAN's re-emergence as a Gulf power is a breathtaking consequence of Iraq's defeat in Kuwait. Its enhanced position has been helped by a gradual recovery from its devastating war with Iraq in the 1980's. But the main factor was its decision to sit on the sidelines and not help President Saddam Hussein, even after the Iraqi ruler gave up his country's remaining war claims against Iran.

The strategy of Hashemi Rafsanjani, the Iranian president, paid off, and Tehran is as much a winner in the war as the Arab members of the allied coalition are. As a sign of Iran's new stature, Mr. Rafsanjani can now assert himself, as he did recently, calling for Mr. Hussein to step down.

Suddenly, Iran is seen by the Gulf nations as an important player in regional security arrangements. Indeed, Secretary of State James Baker has declared that Iran will play an important political role in the Gulf. This new

position raises Iran's credibility with European nations, whose economic assistance it badly needs. Iran even has an unexpected bargaining chip in its talks with the Iraqis on reparations for the 1980's war: It holds many Iraqi planes, which sought sanctuary in Iran during the allied air war.

Will Iran's new stature encourage moderation or militance? It is a mark of the change in its leadership that even the huge number of American troops in the region did not provoke action against Washington. To be sure, Ali Khamenei, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's replacement as spiritual leader, has denounced the U.S. role in the Gulf, and Mr. Rafsanjani called several times for an American withdrawal.

But more significant is the muted nature of the reaction. When militants called for demonstrations against the American presence, few people showed up. Since the Ayatollah Khomeini's death in June 1989, the top mullahs have made economic development their main priority, an emphasis reflected in numerous speeches by the leaders.

Mr. Rafsanjani's public call for Mr. Hussein to resign would appear to contradict the view that the Iranian leaders are more interested in reconstructing the country than in exporting revolution. But his statement should be regarded in the context of domestic politics. Militants have been trying to reactivate Iran's role in spreading the faith, and Mr. Rafsanjani realises that he must not be outflanked by these clerics, some of whom have openly criticised him.

The prospect of making life difficult for Mr. Hussein must be very appealing to the entire Iranian leadership. But will Iran help the Shiite insurgents in southern Iraq in any substantial way? An Iraqi Shiite group in exile in Iran — the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq — does not appear to have significant organisational abilities. Mr. Rafsanjani probably figures that the Republican Guards will ultimately be able to suppress the Shiites, though he may also calculate that it will further weaken Mr. Hussein.

The Iranians must know that lending material support to the

Iraqi rebels would suggest to the West that the country is up to its old tricks. And they understand that economic assistance is contingent on a willingness to act more responsibly in the world.

Thus, it is doubtful that Iran will provide military support for its religious brethren in Iraq. More likely it will provide some financial assistance and possibly grant permission to Iranian "volunteers" to enter Iraq to fight alongside the Shiites against the Sunni-dominated government. Although the Iraqi Shiites did not respond to Iranian incitement to rebel against Mr. Hussein during the Iran-Iraq war, they are now more likely to accept guidance.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rafsanjani can tell his domestic critics that he has not abandoned the cause of the revolution. In the end, he is a pragmatic survivor, and if he plays his cards right he will emerge from the Gulf crisis stronger than before.

Shahrugh Akhavi is professor of international studies at the University of South Carolina. The article is reprinted from The New York Times.

LETTERS

Radio Jordan

To the Editor:

I would like to thank the English service of Radio Jordan for their excellent broadcasting throughout the years. I admire the sophistication and warmth of the DJs as well as respect the hard work that the staff performs under the able directorate of Mr. Jawad Zada.

However, during the Gulf crisis I felt quite frustrated by the length of the news bulletins for more often than not, they were only a few minutes. Because I am dependent on the English service as are others like me, I cling to the radio anxiously awaiting the news concerning the Gulf war. Often, I was bitterly disappointed and sought more information from other sources. Yet, all my faith and trust were centered on Radio Jordan and listening to foreign broadcasting stations only angered me more for their news about Iraq was very biased and irritating.

I realise that the English service is understaffed and perhaps overworked. But I feel that this service is very important and should not be neglected because it not only informs people like me, but also informs persons who might be staying here at the time such as foreign journalists and diplomats as well listeners abroad. If more money could be allotted to expand and further improve the news bulletins, it would surely be money spent for a good cause and would be an asset for Jordan.

E. Yaghi
P.O. Box (6223)
Amman

Stained with blood

To the Editor:

U.S. President George Bush's "success" in killing tens of thousands of innocent Iraqis in the craziest war in history, a war which could and should have been avoided, has reminded me of the words of Macbeth and his wife when they killed a single person:

Macbeth: "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the green one red."

Lady Macbeth: "Here's the smell of blood still: All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand."

"Arabia" is extremely appropriate today as it was in Shakespeare's time.

G. Khoury
P.O. Box 17008
Amman

Inaccurate

To the Editor:

I would like to bring to your attention the following: A Mojahedin spokesman in Paris has denied the report in an article of the Jordan Times (March 4, 1991), regarding the Mojahedin organisation of Iran.

The spokesman said: "What has been written about members of the Mojahedin approaching the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Baghdad is incorrect. Not even a single person from the Mojahedin or from the combatants of the National Liberation Army of Iran has approached the UNHCR for asylum."

Press office of the People's
Mojahedin of Iran — Paris

هذا من الاصل

S. Arabia seeks U.S. military aid

DHAHRAN — Saudi Arabia's defence minister requested tanks and warplanes from the United States Monday, and his forces celebrated victory over Iraq with ancient saber dances and salutes from modern jets.

Prince Sultan said his country needed more defensive weaponry to maintain post-war stability, adding it would look elsewhere if the United States could not provide them.

"The United States government, administration or the Congress, they have to understand our needs and our ambition of trying to maintain the stability of the region," the minister said in an interview.

Prince Sultan, second in line to the Saudi throne, flew into Dhahran's military airbase to review planes that took part in the war against Iraq.

"There is a list of requested armaments that was presented to the United States a long time ago and we hope it will be approved and confirmed by the congress."

He said negotiations were still needed to settle on the price of the military equipment, which included tanks and warplanes.

Saudi Arabia plans to double the current size of its 65,000-man force.

The Bush administration proposed selling 21 billion worth of military hardware to Saudi Arabia but the package ran into opposition from supporters of Israel in Congress.

As a result, the administration split off \$7.3 billion in "immediate needs" for the Saudi contribution to Operation Desert Shield and removed controversial longer-term items such as new

deliveries of F-15 jet fighters. Congress allowed the smaller package to proceed.

"We want the United States, as a friend of ours, to be the main supplier but if there are things that will inhibit the United States from supplying us with that we will look elsewhere," Prince Sultan said. He declined to specify alternative suppliers.

There was no contradiction, he said, between Saudi Arabia's quest for more military punch and statements by U.S. President George Bush about transforming the Middle East into a region of peace.

"If anybody wants to guard his own farm against wild animals it does not mean we want to attack other farms," he said. He declined to identify possible enemies Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries could face in the future.

Arriving at King Abdul Aziz airbase aboard a civilian jet liner, Prince Sultan was welcomed by the an honour guard of white-robed troops with black bandoliers and gilt swords.

The dancers performed the "Ardah Saudia," traditionally reserved for festive occasions including victory in battle.

Later, pilots standing in front of their F-15 strike eagle fighter-bombers, skyhawks, tomados, mirages and helicopters snapped to attention and saluted as Prince Sultan passed in review and jets thundered directly overhead.

After Sunset, Prince Sultan and a large retinue assembled on a field covered with Persian carpets to hear an impassioned celebratory speech and — sabers raised high above their heads — take part in the dance.

"Without George Bush our government cannot do anything," said his brother, Sahib al Rashed, 63. He wanted bananas and diapers for his grandchildren.

Some said the government had lost applications they made on Sunday. Others accused the government of only giving permission to those with connections, called "watta" or "vitamin W" in Kuwaiti slang.

At the ministry, Major Hussein Al Yousef said more than 8,000 people had applied to leave the country from Sunday to Monday. He estimated that more than 2,000 would apply Tuesday.

Israel

(Continued from page 1)

For the time being, though, Mr. Baker and Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said at a joint news conference, Arab attitudes towards the Jewish state were changing.

Mr. Baker reported to Mr. Levy in advance of his meeting with Mr. Shamir on the talks he held in Saudi Arabia and Egypt.

"I am pleased they are beginning to show signs of change," Mr. Levy said.

Mr. Levy subsequently told army radio Tuesday morning that Mr. Baker agreed to take into account Israel's desire to be part of an emerging Middle East defence alliance with the eight Arab states.

Syria praised the U.S. for the first time in years for a positive "stand on the Arab-Israeli conflict that Damascus saw as a significant policy shift by the Americans (see page 2).

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak said the time was not ripe for an international Middle East peace conference to settle the conflict.

"No, not at the present time," Mr. Mubarak told reporters in Cairo when asked whether a conference was timely now that the Gulf war was over.

Mr. Mubarak said confidence-building measures between Israel and the Arabs were needed first, as well as enough preparation for a conference.

"Any conference that convenes without proper preparation is doomed to failure... if we enter an international conference now everybody will reject it," he said.

Syria has said a conference should be held immediately. Foreign ministers of Egypt and seven other Arab states who met Mr. Baker in Riyadh Sunday said a U.N.-sponsored international conference was "an appropriate framework" to settle the Palestinian problem.

Mr. Mubarak said no country had the right to interfere in the internal affairs of the PLO or try to change its leadership.

U.S. President George Bush last week ruled out an early resumption of its support for Iraq. Mr. Baker said after meeting Mr. Mubarak Monday that the PLO knew what was required if it wanted dialogue resumed. He did not elaborate and Mr. Mubarak also declined to give details.

Washington broke off talks with the PLO last June after it failed to condemn a Palestinian seaborne attack on Israel.

Turkey hopes to tie Middle East region together with water pipeline

By Zeynep Alemdar
The Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — Turkey is reviving its "peace pipeline" project, a plan to link six Gulf countries, Syria and Jordan by the world's longest water line.

"We are in need of physical evidence for lasting peace and stability in the area," said Necati Utkan, Turkey's ambassador to Iraq, who promoted the water project when President Turgut Ozal introduced it in 1987.

Turkey is the only country in the dry Middle East with excess water. The threat to desalination plants by the huge Gulf oil slick emphasised water's value.

Under the Turkish proposal, two pipelines would carry a total of 1.6 billion gallons to the eight countries each day from the Seyhan and Ceyhan rivers, which flow into the

Mediterranean.

"It will be the largest water conveyance project in the world," said Graham Poke, a project director at Brown and Root, a Texas-based company which has done research on the plan.

The networks western branch would supply Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia along a 2,654-kilometre route. A 3,861-kilometre pipeline would cross Saudi Arabia to Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

About 30 million people in the region could benefit.

Officials say Iraq was not included because it has enough water, but that it would be technically possible to extend the pipeline if Iraq entered the project later.

As first proposed, the net-

work would have included the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip and West Bank.

Turkey could provide eight per cent of Saudi Arabia's water with the pipelines, officials said. A senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said water could be delivered for about 80 cents a cubic meter (264 gallons), roughly half the cost from a desalination plant.

Turkey is broaching the "peace pipeline" again to generate regional goodwill and gain prestige after the Gulf war, officials say. It also hopes to earn hundreds of millions of dollars annually from selling its water.

Ozal wants to use water to expand Turkey's political and economic ties with its neighbours. He has invited regional leaders to a "water summit" in November on better ways of utilising the resource.

"To establish enduring

peace in the region, it is necessary to begin a process focused on economic interdependence among the middle East nations," Ozal wrote recently in ABC, a Spanish daily.

Construction of the western pipeline will cost about \$8.5 billion and the Gulf line about \$12.5 billion, according to a study Brown and Root did three years ago. The system would take eight years to build.

Ozal has suggested new oil and gas pipelines run parallel to the water line so the trade would be two-way.

That idea may be intended to ease worries about the reliability of water supplies from Turkey.

Saudi Arabia, for example, did not support the project in the past because Turkey could turn off the tap. Last year, Turkey reduced the flow of the Euphrates river to Syria

and Iraq to fill the reservoir of its giant Ataturk dam.

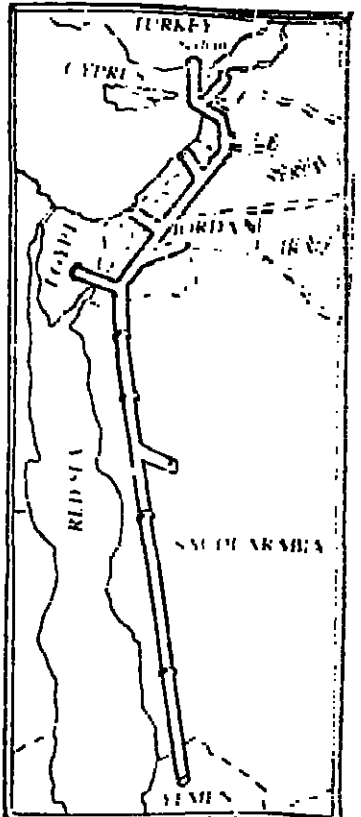
The pipeline idea has not developed to the point where Turkey has begun formal talks with the potential customers, but it recently asked Brown and Root for additional technical information.

Saudi Arabia seems agreeable this time. Its approval is considered vital to convincing others.

Abdul Aziz Khojah, Saudi ambassador to Turkey, said his country could trade oil for water.

"It is the project of the future," he said in interview. "It will turn the whole Arabian peninsula into a new green land and bring countries closer."

The war gave the rich Gulf nations a dramatic reminder of their water shortage. They rely on desalination plants, which can be shut down by oil slicks.



Projected water pipeline to the Middle East

Coming to terms with stress?

ILO Feature

The "end-of-the-century affliction," stress continues to ravage all levels of society. It strikes especially hard in industrialised countries. In Japan, for instance, 60 per cent of the 120 million inhabitants appear to be affected.

Developing countries are not spared either: a recent poll in Morocco revealed that 40 per cent of company executives live under constant pressure.

Whether it be termed "professional sociopathy" or "a sickness of modern societies," the phenomenon first spreads within the world of work. "The spirit of challenge" and the constant pressure of competition are the chief causes. It is not surprising that executives seem vulnerable.

In the United States, 45 per cent of salaried workers employed in posts of responsibility are subjected to excessive stress and 15 per cent of them are prone to nervous depression; in Switzerland, one executive out of four admits to being seriously dissatisfied with his work.

But stress does not necessarily increase with the level of responsibility, in fact the reverse. Research in several countries — Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom and notably Sweden — has shown that the incidence of stress-related illness is higher among workers. A study carried out on 270,000 persons in the United States reveals that the rate of heart diseases is higher among non-executive salaried workers and that it decreases as one moves up the hierarchical ladder.

Certain professions, which require quick adaptation to new or urgent situations, are particularly affected: journalism, especially in the daily press; stock market — or finance-related occupations in general; the medical professions and hospital staff, and teams dealing with emergencies.

Stress affects not only "white-

collar" but also manual workers, the groups termed "vulnerable" — women, older or handicapped workers, migrants — those whose duties are modified or phased out by the introduction of new technologies, and all who are deprived of personal initiative and doomed to monotonous and repetitive tasks.

Moreover, stress can be aggravated by relationship problems, by the fear of losing one's job, or by a host of other non-occupational factors such as family problems, health anxieties, commuting and financial worries.

From the early symptoms to the real illnesses that can result from it, the harmful consequences of stress first concern a person's health. The most frequent disorders range from chronic fatigue to depression, by way of insomnia, anxiety, migraine, emotional upsets, stomach ulcers, allergies, skin disorders, lumbago and rheumatic attacks, tobacco and alcohol abuse, culminating with the most serious consequences of all: heart attacks, accidents and even suicides.

The effects of stress on the functioning of enterprises are no less spectacular: demotivation, work-related accidents, frequent or prolonged sick leave. In the United States, the overall cost of occupationally-induced stress is estimated at \$60 billion a year.

Doctors, psychologists and specialists in the organisation of work are increasingly concerned by the phenomenon. Institutes or centres for stress research have been set up. For several years, the ILO has been active in research and publication on the subject.

It is advisable to tackle the problem from all angles says Dr. Georges Coppée, Head of the Medical Section of the ILO's Occupational Safety and Health Branch.

To various researchers, it seems vital and urgent to develop a positive approach to stress

emphasising its importance in the search for dynamic adaptation to a given situation, rather than concentrating on its pathological aspects.

From a physiological viewpoint, stress is a mechanism that mobilises extra energy in response to sudden demand. Intended to meet emergency situation, stress mechanisms prepare for struggle or escape and are also those of survival. "If health is considered a dynamic equilibrium, stress is a part of it for there is no health without interaction with other people and with the environment. Only excesses are pathological," points out Dr. Coppée.

In practice, the first symptoms act as a kind of alarm signal which reminds the individual that the body has limits not to be exceeded. If, in the case of an executive, for example, stress can be a driving force which allows him to surpass himself and retain a fighter mentality, any exaggeration could seriously harm his health. It would be advisable then for him to organise himself better so as to avoid or minimise tensions and vexations.

"More explicitly," explains Dr. Coppée, "the notion itself of stress challenges our usual scientific conceptions because it establishes a bridge between physical, mental and social well-being. An attack on one means an attack on the others. Thus, a cut in the hand is a physical wound but at the same time it affects the mind, provoking distress or anxiety, and can cause functional disability and incapacity to work. Similarly, the loss of a job has an impact on the mind and on the physical health of the individual."

"As long as one continues to compartmentalise man and his health, one will be unable to understand either fatigue or stress," Dr. Coppée concludes. The medico-social implications

of this approach to stress are important and are largely misunderstood. Thus, for example, in case of an accident, workplace health services should not simply administer first aid and send the victim to hospital but should also be actively concerned with minimising the psychological and social consequences of the accident and ensuring a follow-up until the injured person returns to work.

In an overall conception of health at work, ergonomics and the different methods of work organisation play a vital role. It is essential that every worker benefit from optimal conditions so as to give the best of himself without prejudice to his health that is his physical, mental and social well-being. These conditions are not only material; it is necessary at the same time to be concerned with freeing the individual from certain fears such as being dismissed, or of seeing his efforts recognised or of being the victim of his chief's sudden changes of mood. One of the major causes of stress is the fear of the unknown and a lack of control over the duties to be carried out and over the organisation of work. Under these circumstances, the treatment of stress and its prevention are not medical matters, but are "information" and "participation."

To what extent should enterprises conceive and set up anti-stress programmes and above all make them known? In so doing, do they not risk tarnishing their "image" and being viewed by the public or trade unions as "stressful enterprises"? The question is open. The answer could perhaps be found in setting up health programmes at work based on three requirements set out by the ILO: a safe and healthy working environment, well-being of the worker and respect for human dignity, and the possibility for the work to develop and serve society through his work.



Monotony at the workplace is as harmful as excessive diversity or work overload. Under-stimulation and over-stimulation are both a cause of stress. It seems necessary and urgent to develop a positive approach to stress by keeping in view its value in the search for a dynamic adaptation to a given situation rather than by focusing systematically on its pathological aspects.

Karbala

(Continued from page 1)

groups facing the Iraqi army.

One source said that in addition to the controversy over whether to form a government and parliament-in-exile, the delegates also differed on whether to admit two new opposition factions backed by Saudi Arabia to their alliance.

The Free Iraq Council of Saad Saleh Jaber and the National Salvation Front of Saad Omar Aly "do not carry real weight on the ground in Iraq, but Saudi Arabia wants their representation in the Iraqi opposition alliance to be effective," the source said.

"Some major opposition groups also want the two new factions to be effectively represented in the alliance to provide the opposition with Arab backing and decrease the influence Iran has through its Shiite Muslim allies," he added.

Iran is known to back its fellow Shiite Muslims in Iraq, and has given refuge to tens of thousands of them.

Some opposition groups fear that Iran will support the establishment of an Islamic republic like its own in southern Iraq where most Shiites live.

But Iran has come out strongly in favour of the territorial integrity of post-war Iraq.

Conference members said most of the deliberations by the 23 factions were backstage negotiations outside the three-day conference.

President Saddam chaired a meeting on Monday of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) and ruling Baath Party, Radio Baghdad said.

The Radio said the joint meeting heard a report submitted by RCC Vice-Chairman Izzat Ibrahim on a tour of the governorates of Wasit and Maysan.

The two areas were claimed by travellers, Iraqi exiles and Western intelligence reports to be scene of heavy fighting.

"(Mr. Ibrahim's) report also reviewed the action taken during the tour to complete the tasks of restoring the normal state of affairs and the usual services," the radio said without giving details.

It said the RCC and the Baath leadership — Iraq's highest authorities — also reviewed "developments in the political situation."

Kuwait

(Continued from page 1)

"If I wanted to leave Kuwait, I could have fled during the occupation," said one man. "I just want to get things for my family and come back."

Rice, water, candles, an electrical generator and toner for a copying machine were on Faisal Al Rashed's list. The 43-year-old businessman said he had been coming to the stadium since Sunday, when the Ministry of Interior began accepting applications.

"When Kuwait was freed we thought airplanes would come and drop food from the skies," he said. "Now we realise we have to fight for ourselves."

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U.S.-led allies increase aid to states hardest hit economically by Gulf crisis

LUXEMBOURG (R) — The world's richest countries Monday pledged \$34 billion in new aid to nations hardest hit by the Gulf crisis and said they would study how to repair economic damage wrought by the war.

The meeting of 27 wealthy countries in the Gulf Crisis Financial Coordination Group, was the first effort by the United States and its allies to help the Middle East recover from six weeks of fighting to drive Iraq from Kuwait.

They said the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank should play a key role in any long-term effort to help the region.

But some delegations reacted coolly to U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's idea of a regional development bank.

"There was much scepticism about new institutional set-ups... the response needs to be fast, flexible and broad," said Luxembourg Treasury Minister Yves Mersch who hosted the meeting.

U.S. undersecretary of the treasury David Mulford said the allies, including the European Community, Japan, and the Gulf states, had pledged \$14.86 billion to Monday and that new pledges to the end of 1991 took this to \$15.7 billion.

Most of this, around \$11.7 billion, is being funnelled to Egypt, Turkey and Jordan, the frontline states which suffered serious economic damage from the crisis.

New pledges Monday included \$500 million from Italy, \$200 million from Saudi Arabia, \$100 million from Japan, \$20 million

from South Korea, according to figures supplied by the group.

Although the U.S. chairs the group it has not contributed any aid because of its large military effort in the Gulf war.

Mulford said Germany had made a substantial contribution in recent days which was not included in the \$34 billion, but gave no figure.

Germany had pledged \$1.33 billion in all, the group's figures showed.

Mulford said at least 60 per cent of the funds were grants. Aid covered balance of payments shortfalls, commodity imports, humanitarian and development projects, he added.

Over half the total promised, or \$8.33 billion, had already been distributed.

The meeting took place as

James Baker met Egyptian leaders as part of a 10-day Middle East tour promoting a four point plan which emphasises fostering the region's economic development.

It was the group's first gathering since the end of the Gulf war. It had met four times since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2, Mulford said.

He said the group had responded quickly to Marshal aid for the region and would play a role until the aid was disbursed.

"It is widely viewed as a committee that needs to continue its function, but not a committee that is seeking to become an institution," Mulford said.

He said Baker's Middle East bank plan had not been discussed.

Ankara asks Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to employ Turks

ANKARA (R) — Turkey has asked Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to employ more Turks and ease the return of thousands of its workers who left jobs during the Gulf crisis.

Anatolian News Agency said Tuesday that Labour Minister Imren Aykut met the Kuwaiti and Saudi ambassadors to discuss job opportunities.

The envoys told Aykut Turks would be given priority among migrant workers, the agency said.

Prime Minister Yildirim Akbulut is planning a visit to Kuwait to promote Turkish firms for rebuilding work.

Turkey's official unemployment figure is 13 per cent. Western labour sources put it at around 20 per cent.

Australian premier outlines sweeping reform measures

CANBERRA (R) — Australia eased the brake on imports Tuesday to shake up its industries and force them to become more involved in the dynamism of the Asia-Pacific area.

Prime Minister Bob Hawke announced major cuts in tariffs to stimulate domestic output and eased taxes on industry in a major reform plan entitled "building a competitive Australia."

The supposed virtues of protective tariffs had become deeply embedded in the psyche of the nation, Hawke told parliament, unveiling the plan to make Australia more industrialised and end almost total reliance on revenue from crops and minerals.

The plan aims to look beyond Australia's current recession, which Hawke conceded his labour government had created by acting late to curb consumer

spending on imports.

He listed measures to reduce tariffs from the start of the fiscal year starting July 1, 1992, and ease taxes on local industry:

— The tariff of up to 15 per cent on a range of nearly 600 imports will be phased down to five per cent by 1996.

— Tariffs on motor vehicles will be phased down from 35 per cent in 1992 in annual steps of 2.5 per cent to 15 per cent in the year 2000.

— A 50 per cent sales tax on luxury cars will be cut to 30 per cent with immediate effect. Most of the cars are imported.

— Quotas that limit the import quantities of textiles, clothing and footwear (TCF), which mainly come from Asia, are to be scrapped from March 1993.

— Tariffs on TCF will be cut from a current top rate of 55 per

cent to a maximum 25 per cent by the year 2000.

— A range of strategic manufacturing industries, such as engineering, will from 1992/93 be exempt from wholesale taxes imposed on inputs at varying stages of their production.

— Companies will be able to recoup greater tax refunds from setting depreciation of equipment against tax, Hawke said.

— On major projects, there will be guaranteed access for loggers to forests, subject to environmental impact studies, and more plantations are planned.

The total cost to the economy, largely in reduced income from taxation, will be 33 million Australian dollars (\$25 million) in 1990/91, 447 million dollars (\$340 million) in 1991/92, and 856 million dollars (\$655 million) in 1992/93.

Syrian economy booms with flow of Arab, Western financial aid

DAMASCUS (R) — Syria's economy is enjoying a boom, fuelled by Arab and Western money pouring in to reward its anti-Iraq stand in the Gulf war, economists and diplomats say.

By sending 20,000 troops to the U.S.-led multinational force which drove Iraqi troops from Kuwait, Damascus has ended years of deprivation of Arab and Western aid.

"There is a remarkable recovery in Syria's economy in all sectors... more tenders are being announced on a big scale... this is a significant sign of prosperity," one economist said.

The impoverished country of 12 million people, on the United States list of countries supporting international terrorism, has radically improved its image and ended years of isolation.

Some unconfirmed estimates put the sum that Syria may

already have received from the Gulf states as high as \$1.5 billion, while the European Community has released \$192 million in aid frozen since 1986.

Germany is to grant Syria \$100 million in economic assistance. Japan has pledged a similar sum in aid plus another \$500 million to build a power plant.

Official sources say the government has embarked on 16 new development projects since January, compared to two last year. Two of these, improvements to the Damascus sewerage and the installation of 60,000 telephone lines, are financed by Kuwait.

The government recently liberalised currency regulations in a bid to encourage private sector, export-led growth and to meet the government shortage of foreign exchange.

It introduced two decrees authorising exporters to spend 75

per cent of foreign currency earnings on imports and to sell the remaining 25 per cent to the government at a favourable rate.

Markets are crammed with imported goods which are scarce before the Gulf crisis and exports is expanding fast.

Official statistics show a trade surplus in 1990 of \$1,245.6 million compared with \$927 million in 1989. In 1988 Syria had a trade deficit of \$884.2 million.

Imports of raw material and semi-manufactured imports are up. So are exports of locally manufactured goods.

"Arab countries are expected to finance more development and industrial projects which will contribute to the recovery of the Syrian economy," one economist said.

Eight Gulf war Arab allies meeting in Damascus last week agreed Syria and Egypt should provide troops for a regional

Arab peace-keeping force. In return they will get economic aid from the six Gulf states.

Syria will also benefit from an economic cooperation agreement signed with Saudi Arabia Friday.

Economists said Arab funds would get the economy moving, allowing the government to speed up economic liberalisation.

"Because of the availability of funds, the government will loosen external trade laws which will have a positive effect on the market," the economist said.

One Western diplomat said Syria would find in time that it had to ease state control of its economy to help coordination with liberal Gulf Arab states.

"Eventually, Syria will have to loosen up, end its economic restrictions and open up as Egypt has done. They need to facilitate trade exchanges with their neighbours," he said.

British Airways cuts first-class luxuries

LONDON (R) — Travellers in first-class cabins on British Airways (B.A.) will lose luxuries such as cashew nuts and swizzle sticks because of budget cuts, a London newspaper reported Tuesday.

The airline, which announced Monday that traffic fell by 26 per cent in January 1991 compared with January 1990, would ration after-dinner mint chocolates, the Daily Telegraph said.

Removing cashews from the mixed nuts offered to first-class passengers would save £40,000

(\$75,000) a year, the newspaper quoted a B.A. spokesman as saying.

Flowers would no longer be provided in lavatories and a fruit basket would be replaced with a biscuit tray, the spokesman said.

B.A. ranked 22nd in a poll of 17,700 readers of the Consumer's Association's Holiday which magazine published Tuesday.

Of 48 airlines, Hong Kong-based Cathay Pacific came first, Israel's El Al second and Swissair third. Britain's Discount Virgin Atlantic was ranked fourth.

Soviet miners call all-out pay strike

MOSCOW (R) — Mine leaders in the Soviet Union's two biggest coalfields called Tuesday for all-out strikes to push for higher pay and the resignation of President Mikhail Gorbachev.

Five days before a crucial referendum called by Gorbachev on the future of the Soviet Union, union spokesmen said pit strikes were spreading in several regions and predicted more pits would join the protest.

"I think that after today's decision many miners will join the strike," said Andrei Sivka, a spokesman for the strike committee in the Ukrainian city of Donetsk.

He said 67 out of 254 collieries in the Donbass region of the Ukraine were now on strike, up from 48 on Monday. An estimated 93 were on strike throughout the Soviet Union.

The Ukrainian miners issued the strike call after the Kremlin ignored a Monday deadline to meet their demand for a pay rise of 150 per cent.

The Donbass coalfield is second in size only to the mighty Siberian Kuzbass, where a local activist said nine mines were now on strike.

Siberian miners are pushing demands for Gorbachev's resignation in what they say is a purely political stoppage.

The official news agency TASS said the situation in the Kuzbass was worsening every hour as miners met to decide whether to strike or not.

A spokesman for the independent miners' union in Moscow said four mines had gone on strike at Tula in central Russia and 21 in western Ukraine had joined the stoppage, a claim denied by the republic's government.

Ukrainian radio said all 12 mines in Chervonograd near the Polish border had been on strike since Monday evening.

The strikes have already hit steel production and the government has warned that a full-scale stoppage could throw the economy into turmoil.

Railway workers in some mining regions have appealed to the miners to go back to work, saying cancellation of coal deliveries is cutting freight traffic and thus their incomes.

An all-out strike in July, 1989, caused major disruption and forced a package of concessions on pay and conditions which the miners now say the government failed to honour.

Miners earn about 500 roubles a month (\$900 at the inflated official exchange rate), placing them among the highest-paid workers in the country.

General strike hits Algerian natural gas exports, oil output

ALGIERS (R) — Algerian workers launched a two-day general strike Tuesday, hitting natural gas exports and production of oil and gas, state radio reported.

More than 85 per cent of workers in the oilfields of Hassi Messaoud and Hassi R'Mel observed the strike, the radio said.

Arzew, the main western Algerian port for exports of liquefied natural gas, was paralysed, port authorities said. Only two tankers had loaded gas cargoes and further loading was postponed.

The radio said the strike, called by the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA) in protest against layoffs and rising prices, had been widely followed.

The stoppage, Algeria's first general strike since independence 20 years ago, hit public utilities, schools, universities and big industrial plants.

They included the El-Hajar steel plant in the eastern port of Annaba, a petrochemical complex in nearby Skikda and a vehicle assembly plant in an Algiers suburb, union sources said.

A UGTA official in the main western Algerian port of Oran, Habib Abed, said the strike was 90 per cent effective there.

But it was less successful in private factories, where there was little UGTA presence, the radio said.

The trade union organisation, which claims 800,000 members, called on workers to maintain basic services in hospitals.

In Arzew, a skeleton staff stayed on duty to ensure the security of gas liquefaction and refining installations.

State railways announced before the strike that at least one

train would run between main towns. The stoppage cut bus services in big cities.

Under an agreement between the UGTA and the national carrier Air Algérie, 10 per cent of international flights, mainly to France, were operating.

In government offices, where the main opposition Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) party is strong, the stoppage was only partly successful. A civil servants' union urged members to ignore the call.

Mohammad Gachouche, a UGTA official in central Algiers, estimated the strike was 50 to 90 per cent successful in the capital, depending on the sector.

The official news agency APS said daily newspapers failed to appear. State radio and television staff said they approved of the strike's aims but were still broadcasting normally.

The FIS and the Islamic Trade Union urged their supporters to boycott the strike, which they said was a trick to divert public opinion from the real issues facing Algeria.

Although four opposition parties backed the strike, the FIS said the UGTA, long seen as linked to the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) party, was responsible for Algeria's economic problems because it had supported government policies.

But Social Affairs Minister Mohammad Ghib said in an launched published Monday the strike was "a political act rather than defence of purchasing power."

Ghib said the government would spend 27 billion dinars (\$2.2 billion) this year to subsidise staple commodities.

U.S., Britain resolve landing rights dispute

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. and British officials resolved a long-running dispute over air rights Monday, striking a crucial deal that keeps Pan American (Pan Am) World Airways in business and opens London's top airport to industry leader United Airlines (UAL).

"Both sides have come out a winner," U.S. Transportation Secretary Samuel Skinner told reporters. Without the deal Pan Am "would have gone out of business tomorrow."

Britain was just as upbeat, looking to the prospect of competing head-to-head with U.S. carriers on their own turf.

"We have a massive package of benefits," Transport Minister Malcolm Rifkind said in London.

The deal is worth some £200 million (\$400 million) to Britain, he said.

Under the deal, British Airways PLC has been pushing for more access to U.S. airports — how much access they won was not immediately clear — while UAL had sought to buy Pan Am's landing rights at Heathrow.

Pan Am has been operating under bankruptcy protection and would have been forced to cease operations this week without the money from UAL, which will be used to repay a \$150 million loan.

Under a 1977 pact known as Bermuda 2, Pan Am and Trans World Airlines Inc. (TWA) were the only U.S. airlines allowed to land at Heathrow.

AMMAN EXCHANGE RATES			
Monday, March 11, 1991			
Central Bank official rates			
Buy - Sell			
U.S. dollar	671.0 675.0	124.5 125.2	
Pound Sterling	1241.9 1249.4	376.0 378.3	
Deutschemark	423.8 426.3	115.0 115.7	
Swiss franc	486.1 489.0	56.8 57.1	
		208.7 210.0	

WORLD STOCK MARKET	
TOKYO — Stocks closed firmer, encouraged by the yen's fresh gains against the dollar. Higher bond prices also helped prices up. The Nikkei index ended up 58.05 points or 0.22 per cent to 26,727.42 with a light 500 million shares traded.	
SYDNEY — Australian shares ended firmer but off the day's highs, with little reaction to Prime Minister Bob Hawke's industry statement. The All Ordinaries, which hit 1,434.7 in the morning, fell back to end 5.5 point higher at 1,429.4.	
HONG KONG — Shares closed softer as investors held back and the market consolidated its hefty gains. The Hang Seng index shed 10.96 to end at 3,658.07.	
SINGAPORE — Shares closed weaker but off the day's lows on selective bargain-hunting in active trade. The key Straits Times index closed down 10.93 at 1,477.55.	
BOMBAY — Prices ended mixed in dull trading as state investment houses moved to the sidelines after supporting the market for two weeks. The Bombay Stock Exchange index fell 8.82 points to 1,165.90. The national index lost 3.14 to 585.89.	
FRANKFURT — Shares ended mixed after swinging through a 13-point range on the 30-share DAX index in a largely technical trading session. The index rose 5.83 to 1,571.61.	
ZURICH — Shares closed slightly lower after trading in a narrow range. Potential buyers, hoping for lower prices later in the week, held back. The SPI index fell 3.1 to 1,043.6.	
PARIS — Prices edged back up at midsession as renewed talk of an imminent French base rate cut helped a nervous market. At 1145 GMT the CAC-40 index was up 8.9 at 1,805.60.	

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES			
LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Tuesday.			
One Sterling	1.8660/70	U.S. dollar	
One U.S. dollar	1.1565/70	Canadian dollar	
	1.5630/40	Deutschemark	
	1.7665/75	Dutch guilders	
	1.8570/71	Swiss francs	
	32.23/27	Belgian francs	
	5.3350/3400	French francs	
	1169/1170	Italian lire	
	135.80/90	Japanese yen	
	5.7850/7900	Swedish crowns	
	6.1170/20	Norwegian crowns	
	6.0150/2200	Danish crowns	
One ounce of gold	363.90/40	U.S. dollars	

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Cinema **PHILADELPHIA** Tel: 634144

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Cinema **NIJOM** Tel: 675571

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S. African government unveils laws to scrap land apartheid

CAPE TOWN (R) — The South African government Tuesday submitted draft legislation to parliament to scrap laws that have segregated housing and enforced land apartheid for nearly 80 years.

"The government has now decided... that race and population group should no longer be a qualification for the acquisition of land rights, that exclusive areas for specific races are, therefore, done away with," the government said in a statement.

But cabinet ministers said there would be no attempt to return land seized from blacks under apartheid and no law to forbid discrimination by private owners.

The legislation, scrapping almost 200 laws and more than 15,000 regulations, is almost certain to be approved by the parliament which is dominated by reformist President F.W. de Klerk's National Party.

"If someone in the private sector should decide that he does not want to let a property to a certain person on the basis of his race, he can do that," Planning and Provincial Affairs Minister Hennis Kriel said at a news conference.

The land reform plans were laid out in five draft laws and a

government policy paper submitted to the Cape Town parliament, which still excludes blacks, who outnumber whites five to one.

They include plans for the repeal of all restrictions on black home ownership in areas now reserved for whites as well as laws dating back to 1913 that have restricted black farmers to 13 per cent of the country's land.

The government proposed measures to protect established standards, but not white exclusivity, in white areas and to speed up the creation of new townships for the very poor.

Other clauses called for affirmative action to help blacks buy houses and get farm finance and training.

The measures comprised the first concrete action after De Klerk's Feb. 1 promise to parliament to repeal remaining apartheid laws.

"We are changing the whole picture. We hope that these bills will be on the statute books by the middle of the end of June this year," said Education Minister Stoffel van der Merwe.

Kriel said the government was removing laws enacted under apartheid to bypass established black civil rights.

"Bylaws that differentiate on the basis of colour will not be permitted by law. Anybody, after the scrapping of the group areas act, will be able to buy land anywhere he wants to live."

But he said the government would not interfere in private contracts drawn up by property owners and added that people renting homes would not have the same protection as home-owners.

The paper ruled out one key black demand: "The government is totally opposed to any form of redistribution of agricultural land, whether by means of confiscation, nationalisation or expropriation."

Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC), the government's main negotiating partner in talks about a transition to democracy, has demanded reparations for blacks thrown off their land under apartheid.

"If radical land reform does not take place, we can expect an outburst of uncontrollable political anger," the ANC said in a memorandum last month.

Large parts of the government paper and draft bills deal with measures to help blacks acquire land. Kriel said two million plots held by blacks on leases of 25 to

99 years would automatically become theirs.

Restrictions on the creation of new towns and settlements would be eased to make way for large-scale emergency housing.

"Peace, progress and stability cannot be achieved unless every effort is made to ease the present housing shortage," the government paper said.

A minister last month estimated that more than two million blacks were homeless in South Africa. Private agencies put the figure much higher.

Kriel said more than a million hectares of farmland would be made available to blacks at subsidised prices and black farmers would for the first time be given access to all financial aid packages available to white farmers.

Meanwhile, an overnight curfew brought relative calm to Johannesburg's black townships, where at least 56 people have died in political faction fighting since Saturday, police said Tuesday.

A large army and police presence kept the peace between rival African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha Freedom Party supporters, a spokesman said.

Search for new U.N. chief begins

UNITED NATIONS (R) — With the Gulf war over, the search for a U.N. secretary-general to replace Javier Perez de Cuellar is under way and African countries want his successor to come from their continent.

So far there is only one official nomination — Kenneth Dazie of Ghana — but there are rumours of about two dozen other candidates now that the war is over. The Gulf crisis had preoccupied the world body since last August.

No one candidate appears to be the favourite, but African nations have made it clear the time has come for an African secretary-general following three from Europe, one from Asia and one from Latin America.

Perez de Cuellar, a Peruvian, says he agrees. The U.N. chief, who completes his second five-year stint at the end of 1991, has said he will not run again.

If Africans have been deprived of the top post so have women, who are rarely even among the nominations.

The woman's name mentioned most frequently as a candidate is Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, a pioneer in environmental affairs.

Added to this year's intrigue and gossip is a campaign by Sir Brian Urquhart, a former U.N. under-secretary-general now at the Ford Foundation, to reform the selection process and the U.N. Secretariat in general.

Urquhart and his colleague in the Ford Foundation research organisation, Erskine Childers, want members to draw up a list of qualifications, ask governments for nominations and allow the winner to have more say in appointing senior staff.

They want the term changed to one seven-year stint, rather than five years subjects to re-election, so that the secretary-general is less beholden to the five Security Council permanent members.

Yugoslavia's collective presidency 'paralysed'

BELGRADE (AP) — The head of Yugoslavia's collective presidency declared Tuesday that the federation's executive power was paralysed by the most forceful anti-Communist protests ever seen in Serbia, the largest republic.

Defence Minister Gen. Veljko Kadijevic summoned the highest state body into an emergency session, Borisav Jovic, head of the presidency, said a statement.

"The presidency... is paralysed to such an extent, in these dramatic circumstances, that it has practically ceased fulfilling its constitutional functions and responsibilities," said Jovic's statement, carried by the Yugoslav News Agency Tanjug.

It was not clear whether the meeting had actually begun.

The presidency, nominal commander of the armed forces, includes representatives of all six Yugoslav republics, which are sharply split among themselves over the future of the crumbling Balkan federation.

The move came as Serbia's Communist government faced a

fourth day of student demonstrations in the centre of Belgrade.

The republic's government Saturday called in the military to help quell a protest against Communist rule. Two people were killed and at least 100 injured in the protest, which sparked a wave of new demonstrations posing the government's most serious threat in decades.

Croatia and Slovenia, engaged in a bitter dispute with Serbia about the future of Yugoslavia, denounced the use of the military against protesters.

Jovic's statement said the security situation in Yugoslavia "has been endangered in various parts of the country."

"In such circumstances and upon the demand by the federal defence minister, I have called an urgent presidency session as the supreme commander of the armed forces, to be held immediately," his statement said.

Earlier Tuesday, the Serbian government partially gave in to student protests by demanding the resignations of five Belgrade TV officials.

Khaleda Zia gets crucial support to form government

DHAKA (R) — The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which won the biggest number of parliamentary seats in elections last month, took a step closer towards forming a government by winning the backing of a Muslim fundamentalist group.

The Jamaat-E-Islamic announced its support in a letter to acting President Shahabuddin Ahmad Monday, the official BSS news agency said.

"The letter stated Jamaat will fully cooperate with and support BNP in forming a stable government," the agency said.

The BNP won 138 seats in the 300-member parliament in the Feb. 27 poll, the largest number of seats for a single party but 13 short of an absolute majority. Jamaat won 18 seats.

BNP leader Begum Khaleda Zia, widow of President Ziaur Rahman who was assassinated in

1981, is also expected to receive support from smaller parties and independents, political observers say.

The Awami League, headed by Khaleda's main rival, Sheikh Hasina, is the biggest opposition group in parliament with 88 seats, followed by the Jatiya Party of former President Hossain Mohammad Ershad with 35.

Hasina has repeatedly told Ahmad, a former chief justice who took office after Ershad resigned in December following a bitter opposition campaign, he should not allow Khaleda to form the government.

"It would be grossly unfair if you invite Khaleda Zia to form the government until parliament sits on April 5 to decide which leader commands support of a majority of the members," she told him in a message Monday.

Albania to re-establish ties with U.S.

VIENNA (R) — Communist Albania will re-establish diplomatic relations with the United States on March 15 after a break of more than 50 years. Albania's

official News Agency (ATA) said Tuesday. The agency said Foreign Minister Muhamet Kapllani would travel to Washington to sign a formal document.

Negotiations on re-establishing relations, broken off in 1939 after Italy invaded and occupied the country, have been going on for several months.

Slovak nationalists rally for independence

PRAGUE, Czechoslovakia (R) — Tens of thousands of Slovak nationalists yelling "enough of Prague" have rallied for independence from the Czechs and an end to a united Czechoslovakia.

The Czech state government meanwhile announced it would begin searching for "alternative solutions" for the future, a day after President Vaclav Havel — a Czech — warned the federation could fall apart.

Demonstrators packed central Freedom Square in Slovakia's capital Bratislava for the second straight day, waving national flags and chanting "enough of Prague" "enough of Havel" and "independent Slovakia."

Estimates of the attendance ranged from 25,000 to 100,000. Neither police nor state media gave crowd figures.

Leading Slovak political groups, headed by increasingly

popular Premier Vladimir Meciar, are demanding more autonomy from the central Prague government for their republic — Czechoslovakia's eastern, more rural third.

Some even seek full independence, despite an agreement last November that allowed the Czech and Slovak republics to set their own policy in most areas except defence, monetary control and foreign affairs.

Speakers at the rally, organised by the cultural movement Matica Slovenska, demanded Slovak sovereignty or a confederate state based on a new agreement between Slovakia and the Czech lands.

A statement adopted at end by a show of hands urged Slovakia's parliament and government to "adopt immediately the declaration of the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic."

U.S.: China not selling weapons to Khmer Rouge, Iraq

PEKING (R) — A senior U.S. official said Tuesday that Washington believed China, a major arms supplier, was not selling weapons now to either Khmer Rouge guerrillas fighting in Cambodia or to Iraq.

Richard Solomon, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, told reporters before leaving China that Peking wanted to repair relations with Washington, damaged after the brutal suppression of the 1989 democracy movement here.

He said he had dealt "with a government here that is interested in repairing relations that obviously suffered very serious strain back in the summer of 1989."

Solomon said that over the past day and a half he had had encouraging discussions on a number of issues of concern, including human rights, weapons proliferation, trade and cooperation on regional and international issues.

Chinese officials told him they were working for a solution to Cambodia's 12-year civil war and were not now arming their allies, the Khmer Rouge, one of three guerrilla groups.

"Their position, which they reiterated, is that they want to see the inflow of weapons stopped within the framework of the (U.N.-sponsored) comprehensive solution," Solomon said.

"They tell us that they have stopped the delivery of weapons since the permanent five members of the U.N. Security Council reached the framework agreement back in the summer of last year and they indicated they're prepared to retain that restraint as long as all the other arms suppliers do likewise."

Solomon also discussed Washington's concern about weapons proliferation in the Middle East.

"We did indicate that we are quite concerned about a number of countries that may be sending missiles into this part of the world," he said.

"We indicated that we wanted to work closely with the Chinese to get the issue under control, probably in a multilateral framework."

China used to be one of Iraq's major arms suppliers but Solomon said he believed that had stopped since Baghdad's invasion of Kuwait in August.

"The Chinese as a member of the U.N. have honoured the embargo," he said. "We have every reason to believe they have honoured that embargo..."

In addition to discussing Cambodia with Chinese officials, Solomon met on the issue with visiting Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Igor Rogachev, French Ambassador Claude Martin and Cambodian Prince Norodom Sihanouk, nominal head of the loose guerrilla coalition fighting the Vietnamese-supported government in Phnom Penh.

Indian deputy premier urges vote on polls

NEW DELHI (R) — Maverick Indian politician Devi Lal challenged members of parliament Tuesday to vote frankly on whether they endorsed their leader's calls for an early general election to settle political turmoil.

Deputy Prime Minister Lal said openly that many members of the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) have been saying in private — that the last thing they want to do at the moment is face India's 500 million voters, the world's biggest electorate.

"Let there be a division (vote) on the dissolution of the Lok Sabha also," said the 76-year-old peasant leader, to laughter and applause.

His comments, in the earthy Hindi of north India, came after the house had taken its umpteenth vote in the past two days to clear urgent business.

"I'll expose everybody. When several members asked me why was I following the dissolution (of parliament) I told them, why don't you rebel against your leaders?" he said.

More seriously, Lal said the elections would cost the country about 7.50 billion rupees (\$400 million) which taxpayers would have to fund.

Many politicians privately admit they do not want early polls which they believe are unlikely to produce a clear winner.

They are also concerned an election campaign could stir up the caste and religious violence which have plagued India in the past year.

The only party apparently prepared for a poll is the fundamentalist Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party, which significantly boosted its parliamentary standing in the last, inconclusive, polls in 1989.

Politicians expect President Ramaswamy Venkataraman to announce later Tuesday or Wednesday that he is dissolving parliament, meaning that an early general election will be held.

Major forges new EC alliance with Germany

BONN (R) — British Prime Minister John Major, anxious to end his country's isolation in the European Community (EC), has forged a new alliance with Germany and signalled a clear break with the European policies of his predecessor Margaret Thatcher.

At an Anglo-German summit Monday, Major called for London and Bonn cooperate "warmly" in the EC and made clear he did not share Thatcher's distrust of the Germans or her fear that they would dominate a more closely integrated community.

"I think the message that emerges from this summit is the extent and the warmth of the coming together in relationships between Britain and Germany," Major told a news conference. "In Britain we're very pleased with this."

Major, who took over from Thatcher in November, has quickly established a friendly, first-name relationship with Chancellor Helmut Kohl which contrasts starkly with the often frosty meetings between Kohl and Thatcher.

The two leaders took pains to stress that their new friendship did not mean a weakening in Germany's traditionally strong ties with France, saying all three countries should work together on political and economic integration in the EC.

3 killed in Mexican plant explosion

COATZACOALCOS, Mexico (Agencies) — Pipes in a chlorine plant near this southern city exploded Monday, setting fire to the installation, authorities said.

Three people were reported killed and about 350 injured. The blasts shook buildings and shattered windows in nearby towns. Flames shot more than 100 feet (33 metres) into the air and were visible for miles.

"At first people thought it was an earthquake," said Ciria Ines Jimenez Martinez, a social worker at the hospital in Nanchinan, a few miles from the plant. "The

second one was stronger and everyone panicked."

Officials at Petroleos Mexicanos, S.A., told a news conference that three employees died in the explosion at its petrochemical plant in Pajaritos, the local newspaper El Diario del Istmo reported. The town is located near the Gulf coast city of Coatzacoalcos, 300 miles (470 kilometres) southeast of Mexico City.

Maria Elvira Santa Maria, an El Diario reporter, said "A tremendous mushroom cloud" could be seen after the explosion.

Petroleos Mexicanos, or Pemex, the government oil monopoly, said 122 people were injured, but tallies at nearby hospitals suggested a much higher injury count.

A staff member at the Pemex Clinic in Coatzacoalcos said about 200 people were treated there. The Nanchinan hospital treated 103.

Manuel Avila Y Avila, the Red Cross chief in Coatzacoalcos, said 30 people were taken to the Social Security Hospital there, and 13 others were treated and released by the Red Cross.

Blast damages 5 buses in Athens

ATHENS (AP) — Five tour buses were damaged by explosions early Tuesday in attacks in which Greece's most lethal urban terrorist group claimed responsibility.

Newspaper Eleftherotipia said that a caller purporting to represent the leftist November 17 Organisation phoned to explain that the tour buses were bombed in support of striking bus drivers protesting government plans to privatise the ailing state-owned and operated Greek urban bus company or EAS.

Public Order Minister Yiannis Vassiliadis said that although police had not authenticated the claim, the bombs used were "identical" to those used by November 17 in attacks against Western companies during Gulf

war.

Government spokesman Vyrro Polydoros connected the explosions with the trial of former Premier Andreas Papandreu and three of his former ministers on corruption charges that opened Monday.

"It's an impressive coincidence that the bombs went off the day the trial began," he said, but did not elaborate.

The tour buses were parked overnight in streets at the suburbs of Kipseli and Galatsi on the outskirts of Athens and sustained serious damage from the explosions. Police said no one was injured by the midnight blasts because the buses were empty at the time.

The government has rented four buses and pressed military

vehicles into service in an effort to transport stranded passengers.

The strikes which started two months ago, are called at peak hours and have created hardship for over 1.5 million daily commuters who work in and around the capital. About 4 million of Greece's 10 million population reside in and near Athens.

Bus drivers plan further rush hour walkouts Tuesday and Thursday and two 24-hour strikes Wednesday and Thursday.

November 17 has been active in Greece since 1975 when it first assassinated CIA station chief Richard Welch. Since then it has claimed responsibility for 13 more murders and scores of bombings especially against Western interests.



Bush asked to prove he is president

ARLINGTON, Virginia (R) — George Bush was momentarily stumped when a sceptical schoolboy asked him to prove he was the president of the United States. "How do I know you're the president?" Anthony Henderson, 8, asked Bush. The president was visiting Barcroft Elementary School, where Anthony is a pupil, to salute members of the U.S. Marine Corps who serve as volunteer tutors there. "Did you think I was a pretending guy?" Bush asked.

He produced a Texas driving licence and showed it to Anthony. "See, B-U-S-H," he said. But it didn't list his occupation. "Here's my grandson playing baseball," he said, displaying a photograph.

"I might have some other evidence," Bush added as he drew a credit card from his wallet. "Do you accept American Express here?" "I'll tell you how I can prove it," Bush finally said.

"There's a great big black limousine car out there," Anthony still looked doubtful.

Jealous wife cuts off an inch

HONG KONG (R) — A 38-year-old Hong Kong woman, enraged by her husband's infidelity, snipped off part of his penis with scissors while he slept and flushed it down the toilet, police said. The 35-year-old man, who was not identified, awoke in agony to find his wife had attacked him with the scissors because she was jealous of his girlfriend, police said. He called police before making his way to a nearby clinic. "About one inch (2.5 cm) was cut off and flushed away," a police spokesman said. The woman was to appear in court, accused of malicious wounding.

Australia sells tonne of new gold coins in 2 days

SYDNEY (R) — Australia sold one tonne of new gold bullion coins in just two days last week, including 650 one-kilogramme gold nuggets, the biggest coins in the world. Gold refiner Goldcorp Australia said international investors snapped up most of the 7,494 gold coins sold since the launch of a new issue Wednesday, earning the nation millions of dollars in export revenue. The one-kilogramme (35.27 troy ounce) nugget, of 99.99 per cent gold, has a face value of 10,000 Australian dollars (\$7,600). By weight, South East Asian investors took half of the coins sold, Europeans 35 per cent and Japanese 10 per cent. Goldcorp said. Five per cent were sold in Australia. "Overseas sales so far will generate about 16 million dollars (\$12 million) in export revenue for Australia," said Goldcorp, operator of the Perth mint that issues the coins. "With the formal launches of the coins still to be held in Europe, the USA, Hong Kong and Tokyo, orders are expected to quickly reach two tonnes."

That compares with the 200 tonnes of gold Australia is forecast to produce in the year to June 30. The new series of coins have been issued in two-ounce, 10-ounce and one-kilogramme denominations. Until now the maximum size had been one ounce.

Woman planning virgin birth

LONDON (R) — A British woman who has never had sex is undergoing artificial insemination treatment that she hopes will lead to a virgin birth. British newspapers have reported. The woman, who was not named, is in her 20s and single. She was said to be having the treatment at a clinic in the central English city of Birmingham run by the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS). Two other similarly inexperienced women have requested the £185 (\$345) treatment but have not started yet, the papers quoted the BPAS as saying. The Daily Mail quoted a spokeswoman for the BPAS as saying there had probably been previous virgin births using artificial insemination, but they had not been publicised. "Most of the virgins we see are married with psychosexual problems," spokeswoman Tara Kaufmann said. "The woman receiving treatment at the moment is heterosexual, but we would treat a lesbian in the same way." The Birmingham clinic's policy drew fire from local member of parliament Dame Jill Knight of the ruling Conservative Party, who said it was wrong for doctors to help virgins to have children. "It is irresponsible to imagine a more irresponsible act than to assist a woman to have a child in this highly unnatural way," she said in a statement.

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